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SIR ANDREW WYLIE,

OF THAT ILK.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "ANNALS OF THE PARISH," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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SIR ANDREW WYLIE.

CHAPTER I.

OUTSIDE TRAVELLING.

NEAR the great gate that led to Chastington-hall stood a small public-house—the Sandyford Arms; it was about a quarter of a mile from the village, and had been established chiefly for the accommodation of the servants of visitors, and of the labourers employed in the grounds. At this house the London coaches were in the practice of stopping to deliver letters or parcels, as the case happened to be; but in the opinion of the passengers, to enable the drivers to regale themselves in the morning with a glass of rum and milk, and in the evening with a draught of ale.

Here our hero, in due time, after passing the Countess, was set down from the top of a coach which left London the preceding day, but so covered with dust that a fellow-passenger of the sister isle declared that if he was a potato he might grow without any other planting.

Andrew, on alighting, procured materials for washing, and changed his dress; and as Mrs Tapper, the landlady, was an agreeable talkative matron, he bespoke a bed, conditionally however. "I would like vera weel, mistress, to bide wi' you," said he; "and maybe I may do sae, so ye'll hae the considerateness to keep a bed, at least till I come back from the Hall; but if I shouldna happen to come back before twelve o'clock at night, or sae, ye needna expec me."

The truth was, that he counted on being invited to take up his abode at the Hall; but in case of disappointment, took this method of having another string to his bow.

When he had equipped himself in the wonted style in which he was in the practice of visiting at Sandyford-house in London, he proceeded up the grand avenue to the portal of the mansion. But as he approached nearer and nearer, and the

spacious and richly adorned front, with the numerous gilded spires, pinnacles, and domes dilated in his view, his wonted confidence began to fail, and he experienced a feeling of diffidence that had never to an equal degree affected him before. He wondered what could be the matter with himself, considering how intimately acquainted he was with the Earl. In a word, he felt as abashed and out of sorts, as a young nobleman does in going to court for the first time, although assured of a gracious reception, both from his personal knowledge of the monarch, and acquaintance with the principal attendants.

When he reached the portal, the gate was open, and the porter was absent, so that he entered in quest of a door to knock at, or a bell to ring; but before he had advanced many paces, the porter came to him, (an old corpulent, and somewhat testy as well as proud personage) and gruffly inquired what he wanted.

"I am come frae London," replied Andrew, still under the repressive influence of the genius of that magnificent mansion, "on business wi' my Lord."

Peter Baton, the porter, surveyed him from

head to foot, and thought there was not much of the arrogance of a gentleman in his look or garb; and his face had the tinge of a rustic exposure to the weather—the effect of his outside travelling.

"My Lord is out, young man, a-riding, and it will be some time before he returns; you may therefore step into the servants'-hall and rest yourself. There is plenty of good ale for all strangers."

This was said in a more civil tone by Baton, in consequence of the humility of Andrew's appearance.

Our hero, however, did not accept of the hospitable recommendation, but replied, "I'm vera much obliged to you; but I'll just dauner about in the policy till the Earl comes in, as my concern's wi' himsel."

At this crisis, however, his Lordship rode into the Court, and instantly recognized him with all his usual jocularity, which sent honest Peter Baton to his post grumbling, wondering who the devil that queer chap could be, and concluding in his own mind that he must be some apprentice to one of the Jew money-lenders, for whom the woods were so rapidly thinning.

The moment that Andrew was in the presence

of the master, his habitual ease returned; and in going into the library with the Earl, gave his Lordship such a description of his adventures in the journey from town, as effectually cleared, as the Earl himself expressed it, the dockweed from his stagnant thoughts.

"If your Lordship," said Andrew, "has never travelled on the tap o' a coach by night, I wouldna advise you to try't; for although I cannily placed myself between an Irishman and an auld wife, in the hope that the tane would keep me awake by his clavers, and the other by her clatter, and so save me frae couping aff, a' was naething, even wi' my own terrors free gratis, to haud me frae nodding as if my head had been an ill sew't on button; and the warst o' a' was, the deevil o' an Irishman, though he was sitting on the very lip o' the roof, he had nae mercy, but fell asleep as sound as a tap, the moment his tongue lay, and was every noo and then getting up wi' a great flaught of his arms, like a goose wi' its wings jumping up a stair, alarming us a' as if he was in the act o' tumbling down aneath the wheels. And then the carlin, she grippit wi' me like grim death,

at every joggle the coach gied; so that if, by ony mischance, she had been shooggled aff, whar would I hae been then? It's really, my Lord, an awfu' thing to travel by night on the tap o' a coach."

"True, Wylie; but why did not ye take the inside?" said the Earl.

Andrew did not choose to confess the real saving cause, considering the liberal provision his Lordship had procured for him; but, evading the question, replied, "It's no every ane, my Lord, that can thole the inside o' a coach, especially the foreseat that draws backward."

"Ay; but what prevented you from taking the other?" cried his Lordship, who correctly guessed the true reason of the preference for the outside.

"Ye may weel say that, my Lord; but I thought the outside would hae been vera pleasant; and, indeed, naething could be mair sae, as we came trindling along in the dewy eye o' the morning, smelling the caller air frae the blithesome trees and hedges, a' buskit in their new cleeding, like lads and lasses dressed for a bridal."

"Poetical, by all that's marvellous!" exclaim-

ed the Earl at this sally; "there is no exhausting the incomprehensible treasury of thy accomplishments. Sidney and Crichton were as the million compared to thee."

Andrew assumed an extremely well feigned seriousness, and replied, "I ken your Lordship's joking way; but whatever may happen, I trust and hope I'll ne'er be ony sic thing. Poeticals, my Lord, are like heather flourishes—a profitless bloom—bred in the barren misery o' rocks and moorlan's.—Na, na, my Lord, I'm like the piper's cow, gie me a pickle pea-strae, and sell your wind for siller. That's the precept I preach; and I wadna, my Lord, after my journey, be the waur o' a bit fodder just noo."

Lord Sandyford was not altogether deceived by this whimsical speech; but he rang the bell, and ordered in some refreshment. "My mother," said he, "is with me at present, and we must wait dinner for her. By the way, as she's one of the old school, you must be a little on your p and q's."

"Unless," replied Andrew, "she's greatly out

o' the common, I dare say I'll be able to pit up wi' her."

"That I don't doubt; but perhaps she may not be disposed to put up with you. Ladies of a certain age, you know, will have their own way."

"Ay, my Lord, leddies o' a' ages would fain hae their ain way, an we would let them. However, I dare say the auld Countess is nae sic a cainstrarie commoditie as maybe ye think. If I ance get her to laugh wi' me, I'll maybe gar her do mair—for the young Leddy, that was aye as mim as a May puddock to a' the lave o' mankind, made me, ye ken, just a pet."

The Earl's countenance changed; and rising from the sofa, into which he had carelessly thrown himself, walked several times in silence across the room. Our hero observed his emotion, and sensible of having gone too far to retreat, added, "Gratitude, my Lord, has tied up my fortune wi' your favour, and you maun allow me to speak o' her Leddyship as I feel. She's a woman o' a powerfu' capacity, but needs cooking."

His Lordship stopped, and, knitting his brows, looked sternly on Andrew.

"I'm no gi'en to gambling, my Lord; but I would," cried our hero, "wager a boddle to a bawbee, that, although your Lordship's aye in the right, my Leddy's no far wrang."

This upset the Earl's austerity completely, and turning on his heel, he laughingly said, "Then you think me, Wylie, somewhat of a pertinacious character—too strict with my wife."

"Just so, my Lord—I think ye were overly strict in taking your ain way, without reflecting how it might affec her. Nae doubt your Lordship was in the right—ye were privileged to do so. But what I would uphold on behalf of the absent Leddy, poor woman, is, that she was nae far wrang, since ye did sae, to tak a' wee jookie her ain gait too. My Lord, you and her maun gree."

"Impossible, impossible, Wylie!" exclaimed the Earl, not displeased at the advocacy which our hero seemed disposed to plead in behalf of the Countess. And he then explained to him

the mystery of the child, and that his object in sending for him was that he might assist in ascertaining the facts and circumstances. Andrew listened with no inconsiderable degree of amazement. He, however, allowed no remark to escape; but thought that there might be some mistake in the statement, or some error in the conception.

When his Lordship concluded,—for he spoke with agitation, and with much energy of feeling,—our hero said, with unaffected sincerity, "My best services are at the command of your Lordship. It is my duty to serve you—it is my interest, my Lord—and that is the plainest way I can tak to assure your Lordship, that I'll do the part of an honest man, and a true servant. But, my Lord, I'll neither hae colleague nor portioner. Your Lordship's Leddy-mother, and the Doctor, who have gone to the inns, may hook a baukie-bird in the air, or a yerd taed on the brae, and think they hae catched a fish, and they may catch a right fish too. Ye'll let me, however, my Lord, cast my ain tackle in the water, saying naething to them till we compare the upshot."

Before the Earl could reply, the carriage, with

the Doctor and the Dowager, was heard in the court; and in little more than a minute after, her Ladyship, leaning on his arm, agitated and depressed, entered the library.

Andrew perceived that they had caught, as he anticipated, either a baukie-bird, or a yerd tead, and brought it home for a fish; but he said nothing. The Dowager, on observing a stranger in the room, immediately retired, followed by the Earl. The moment they were gone, and the door shut, our hero sidled up to the little prim physician, and without preface, said at once to him, "Noo, sir, what hae ye got by this gowk's errand?"

Dr Trefoil started aghast, and bending forward, looked as if he examined some reptile of which he was afraid. He then resumed his wonted erect and precise air, saying, "May I presume to ask whom I have the honour to address, and to what you allude?"

Andrew, whose quick insight of character was instinctive, saw the self-sufficiency of the Doctor and determined to take the upper hand of him, replied, "Ye're speaking to Andrew Wylie, sir,

—I dinna think there's mickle honour in't,—and what I was asking anent, is the affair of my Lord and my Leddy, that ye hae been thrashing the water, and raising bells about."

"I do not understand you, sir," said the Doctor, somewhat confounded. "But if you mean what has been the result of my journey with the Countess-Dowager to Castle Rooksborough, I regret to say, that it has been attended with most unhappy effects. Her Ladyship and I happened to stroll into the garden, where we discovered the unfortunate Lady Augusta Spangle,—for she can no longer now be called the Countess of Sandyford——"

"Hoot, toot, toot, Doctor; no sae fast, no sae fast," interrupted Andrew. "What did ye see?"

"We saw her and Mr Ferrers in a most unpleasant situation."

"Noo, Dr Trefoil," replied Andrew, "but that I ken ye're mista'en, I could wager, as sure as ony thing, that there's a wee spicerie of I'll no say what in this.—O Doctor, it would hae been mair to the purpose, had ye been kirning drogs with the pistle and mortar in your ain shop, than

gallanting frae Dan to Beersheba with an auld prickmaleerie Dowager, to pick holes in the coats o' your neighbours."

"Sir, your language and insinuations are insulting," cried the Doctor, reddening into valour.

"Dr Trefoil, I'll tell you something that ye'll maybe no be ill pleased to learn. I'm no a gamecock. The deadliest weapon that I ever handle is a doctor's bottle; so that your whuffing and bouncing are baith ill-war't on me. Keep your temper, Doctor; keep your temper, or ye may lose your appetite for my Lord's dinner. Howsever, I forgie you for this bit spunk of your bravery, and I doubt not but we shall by and by be couthy friens, though we will differ on twa points—that's certain. I'll ne'er allow that physics hasna an abominable taste; and some better evidence than your seven senses, my man, maun be forthcoming, before I credit this story o' the twa ghosts that you and the poor feckless auld Leddy saw at Castle Rooksborough."

"Ghosts!" cried the Doctor, utterly amazed at the self-possession of his companion.

"Ay, ghosts, Doctor; and I'm thinking they

hae been twa o' your ain patients, they hae gi'en you sic a dreadfu' fear. What did they say to you, and what said ye to them?"

"Sir, you very much astonish me—exceedingly. I know not that I ever met with any thing like this. Sir, the Countess-Dowager knew Lady Sandyford at the first sight, and I could be in no mistake with respect to Mr Ferrers, whom I have known from his childhood."

"A' that may be true, Dr Trefoil. I'll no dispute that the Countess-Dowager was able to ken her gude-dochter, and that ye can decypher the difference between Mr Ferrers and a bramble-bush. But, Doctor, what did ye see?—that's the point—a gentleman and a leddy in a garden picking lilies for a posey. O Doctor, Doctor, ye maun be an ill-deedy body yoursel, or ye wouldna think sae ill o' others. What, noo, was you and the auld leddy after, when ye were linking and slinking sae cagily wi' ane anither in holes and corners?—

'Davy chaset me through the pease,
And in amang the cherry-trees.'

Ah, Doctor, Doctor, ye deevil—Vow but ye're a Dainty Davy."

The manner in which this was said and sung overpowered the Doctor, and, in spite of himself, he was compelled to laugh. In the same moment the bell of the portal summoned them to dinner.

CHAPTER II.

CONVERSATION.

ANDREW and the Doctor, on reaching the dining-room, found the Earl and his mother already there. The Dowager was somewhat surprised at the uncouth appearance of Andrew; and his Lordship was evidently amused at the look with which she inspected him. At first, and for some time, the conversation was vague and general; but the Earl saw that Andrew was studiously cultivating the good graces of the old Lady; and that although every now and then she looked at him stately and askance, occasionally both his manners and language deranged the settled seriousness of her features into a smile.

When the desert was placed on the table, and the servants had retired, our hero opened his bat-

tery, by saying to the Earl, "What do you think your Leddy mother here, and my new friend the dainty Doctor there, hae been about, my Lord?"

Her Ladyship was in the act of holding her glass while the Doctor poured a little wine into it; but at the nonchalance of this address she withdrew her hand, and erected herself into the stateliest pitch of dignity; and the physician setting down the decanter, his task unperformed, looked across the table in unspeakable amazement. His Lordship smiled, and replied, "Why, Wylie, how should I know? I dare say something they don't like to hear of, if I may judge by their looks."

"Weel, I'll tell you," resumed Andrew. "Now, my Leddy, ye maun just compose yoursel; for it's vera proper his Lordship should hear how you and the Doctor were playing at Damon and Phillis among the groves and bowers.—They think, my Lord, that they saw your Leddy gallanting wi' a gentleman."

"Monster!" exclaimed the Dowager, flaming with indignation.

The Doctor was panic-struck.

"Whisht, whisht, my Leddy," cried Andrew, slyly; "if you will be poking at a business of this kind, ye maun just abide the consequences. But I would ask what greater harm could there be in the Countess walking in a garden with a well-bred gentleman, than in your Ladyship doing the same with that bit body o' a Doctor?"

The Earl perceiving the turn that the conversation was taking, and knowing from Andrew's manner that the truth would be served up without any disguise, he was uneasy and disconcerted, and almost wished that the topic was changed. But anxious at the same time to learn the whole circumstances, and curious to know the point of light in which it struck our hero, he remained, as it were, seemingly absent and inattentive, making a Niobe's face of an orange, and squeezing it, "all tears," into his glass.

Andrew continued,—"I have always heard, Leddy Sandyford, that ye were a wise and a sensible woman; but I would ask you a question:—Granted noo that ye did see a decent woman like the Countess,—but like's an ill mark,—would it no

hae been mair to the purpose to hae made sure, in the first place, that it was really her? and in the second, to have inquired at herself on the spot what she was doing there? Na; my Leddy, this is a serious concern, and the truth must be borne wi'; to come away without searching it to the bottom, wasna according to your wonted discretion; and if ye hadna been inoculated wi' a bad opinion of your good-dochter before-hand, ye wouldna hae put sic an ill colour on what may have been in itself a very comely action."

The Doctor by this time had in some degree recovered himself; and the freedom with which Andrew spoke having an infectious influence on him, said, "But, sir, you forget that there is a child in the case."

The Dowager, however, who had sat some time in a state of consternation, interrupted the conversation, exclaiming, "Lord Sandyford, how can you permit this at your table, and in my presence?"

"Why," replied the Earl, "I'm afraid there is something like reason in wh[illegible] lie says; he

is a being of a strange element, and your Ladyship must endure to hear him out; or you will perhaps do both his wit and his wisdom injustice."

Andrew discovered that he had gone too far with the circumspect Dowager. He had treated her with a sort of freedom that could only have been used with impunity to the whist-table tabbies of London; those whom he occasionally met with, and, as he said, touzled their decorum. But his natural shrewd perception of character soon enabled him to correct the error, and to adapt his conversation much more to the Dowager's formal notions of etiquette and delicacy.

"I'll tell you what it is, my Leddy," said he; "from the first to the last, there has been a great misunderstanding in the whole business between my Lord and the Countess; I could see that long ago, though I hae but twa een, and na better anes than my neighbours; they have wanted a sincere friend between them, the like o' your Leddyship, for example; and noo that they're hither and yont frae ane anither, it behoves a' that wish them weel, and few hae mair cause to do sae than my-

sel, who has been made, as it were, by my Lord, to take tent that a breach is no opened that canna be biggit up. Joking aside—I think your Leddyship and the Doctor hae been a wee hasty in your conclusions. I'll no say that the Countess is an innocent woman, but let us hae some proof o' her guilt before we condemn. As to the bairn, that's a living witness of a fact somewhere—I alloo that. But, my Leddy, I'll tell you what I'll do; that is, if ye approve it, for I would submit to your better judgment. I'll gang warily and cannily o'er to Castle Rooksborough mysel, and muddle about the root o' this affair till I get at it. I think that I may be able to do this as weel as a person o' mair consideration. Naebody in this country-side kens me; I'll be scoggit wi' my ain hamely manner; and if I can serve my Lord, I'm bound by gratitude to do sae."

After some further conversation this project was approved of, and the Dowager began to entertain a more condescending disposition towards our hero.

The carriage was ordered to be ready to convey him early next morning to the Rose and Crown; but

said he, "No just sae far; I maun gang there on shanks-naggy; I'll only tak it till within a mile or twa o' the place; and when I hae got my turn done I'll either come slipping back, or the servans can, at their leisure, bring the carriage on to the inns, whar I'll get in as an utter stranger, taken up by them, as it were, for a job to themselves."

The aristocracy of the Dowager did not entirely relish this method of setting on foot an inquiry into the conduct of a Countess of Sandyford. But Andrew combated her prejudices so adroitly, and in so peculiar a manner, that she was forced to acquiesce.

"It's no for me, certainly," said he, "to enter into a controversy with your Leddyship on points o' this nature; but ye hae lived o'er good a life to ken ony thing about the jookerie-cookerie o' crim coning."

The Dowager's face, which had for some time worn a complacent aspect, became again troubled at this renewal of a familiarity so little in harmony with her habits and notions; but having sat her due lady's portion of time at the table, she rose

and left the room. The Earl also soon after retired, leaving the Doctor and Andrew by themselves; the Physician, however, was so effectually mastered by the irresistible humour of his companion, that, dreading to encounter his raillery, under the pretext of professional engagements, he rose and went home before tea was announced.

Our hero being thus left alone, pondered on the circumstances which had procured to him the confidence of Lord Sandyford, and the promptings of his own honest persuasion made him determine to leave no effort untried to restore the domestic happiness of his patron. In frequenting the parties at Sandyford-house, and in the course of the familiar access which he was allowed at all times both to the Earl and Countess, he had noticed the cold politeness which existed between them; but he formed an estimate of their respective dispositions much more correct than that of the world in general. He discovered, through the disguise of his Lordship's habitual ennui, a gnawing anxiety, and justly ascribed his dissipation to the irritation of his embittered reflections. The equa-

ble and sustained deportment of her Ladyship was not, however, so easily penetrated; but he saw that it was more the effect of practice and caution, than her natural disposition; and suspected that she possessed an inherent energy, which it only required commensurate circumstances to call it into action. She was evidently a woman not easily disturbed by the little occasional incidents which so profoundly affect the happiness of her sex; and her feelings having no particular object to interest them, neither children, nor, in a certain sense, husband, she moved along the stream of time like a stately vessel on the tide, whose superb appearance is all that attracts the attention of the spectator.

Her Ladyship was certainly to blame, for not endeavouring to recall the scattered affections of her Lord; nor is it easy to frame an apology for her negligence in this respect. But how many ladies act in the same way, and, heedless of the unsettled and fluctuating state of all human attachments, seem to consider, when they are wedded, that it is no longer requisite to continue those

agreeable humours and graces which first won the esteem of their husbands. The triumph of woman lies not in the admiration of her lover, but in the respect of her husband; and it can only be gained by a constant cultivation of those qualities which she knows he most values. But Lady Sandyford, like many of her sex, had been taught to entertain other notions. She did not certainly regulate herself, as many others, fatally for their own happiness, often do, by the standard of some particular individual, whom habit or duty may have taught them to venerate—a father, a brother, or a guardian, but she did what was equally unfortunate,—she courted public admiration, and it was with deference towards it that all her actions and motions were estranged from that sphere of duties, which would have endeared her to the sensitive bosom of her Lord. Our hero, therefore, in contemplating the result which had flowed from her apparent indifference, suspected that she felt infinitely more under the separation than the Earl conceived.

He did her also justice in another point; he could not for a moment allow himself to think she

was guilty even of levity. He had remarked her pride, and his intuitive knowledge of human nature convinced him, that pride alone will often do the part of virtue. In a word, the tenor of his cogitations were honourable to himself, and favourable to the Countess. For, not assuming the probability of guilt, but only desirous to reach the bottom of the business, he was able to take a far more candid view of the different presumptions against her, than if he had been actuated by any preconceived opinion. In this generous frame of mind, he embarked with a determination to sift the whole matter to the utmost, and, in the end, if he found the conduct of the Countess what he hoped and expected it would prove, he resolved to speak to her freely of what he had observed in her behaviour towards her husband, and then to bring about the more difficult and delicate task of a cordial reunion.

When the mind entertains a noble purpose, it never fails to dignify the physiognomy and external appearance. Andrew, in obeying the summons of the Dowager to tea, entered the room with an ease of carriage which struck her, not

only on account of its propriety, but also by the contrast which it presented to his naturally insignificant air and homely garb.

Her Ladyship, in the interval after quitting the dining-room, was not, upon reflection, much satisfied with what had passed, and was resolved to be both cool and dignified, in order to prevent a repetition of the familiarity which had so ruffled her notions of decorum; but the generosity which lighted up the smooth round face, and little twinkling eyes of her guest, produced an instantaneous and sympathetic effect; and instead of the austere grandeur which she had determined to practise, she invited him to take a seat on the sofa beside her, with a graciousness of manner that could not have been excelled, even had she known the intentions with which he was at the moment animated.

When the Earl, who soon after entered the room, saw them in this situation, his favourable opinion of the tact and address of Andrew was considerably increased. He knew the nice notions of his mother, and her profound veneration for the etiquettes of polite life, and had, from the

first, apprehended a rupture, the state of her mind at the time not being at all in unison with that familiar drollery which our hero could neither disguise nor repress. He was, therefore, in no small degree surprised to find them seated together, and apparently on those terms which he had never imagined it was practicable for Andrew to attain with her Ladyship.

During tea the conversation was general and lively; no allusion was made to what had constituted the chief and most interesting topic after dinner; and the old Lady was several times constrained to laugh heartily at Andrew's ludicrous adventures in his journey from London, as well as at some of his queerest stories, of which he selected those most calculated to please her; so that, while she perceived he was a person of no refined acquirements, she could not but acknowledge in her own mind that he was undoubtedly endowed by nature with singular shrewdness, and with peculiar talents of no ordinary kind. It was true, that he said things which a delicate respect for the prejudices and notions of others would have restrained a man of more gentlemanly pretensions

from expressing, but there was no resisting the strong common sense of his remarks, nor withstanding the good-humoured merriment of his allusions. She, however, now and then felt uneasy that she had so rashly sent back the Countess's letter. But like all others who do any thing of which they afterwards doubt the propriety, she concealed entirely from her son, and wished, if possible, to forget herself, that she had taken so decided a part.

CHAPTER III.

NEW LIGHTS.

"I FEAR, my Lord," said our hero, when the Dowager had left the room, "that I have spoken o'er freely on this misfortune that has befallen your Lordship's family; but, in truth, my Lord, a sore at no time will bear handling. If I had conversed in a manner that might have been mair fitting to the occasion, it wouldna hae mended the matter; so I rather ran the risk of the consequences with your Leddy-mither, than be slack in delivering my honest opinion. But setting joking aside, my Lord, this story of hers and the Doctor's, concerning the gentleman ayont the bush, is really something vera extraordinar."

"Yes, Wylie," replied the Earl, "it is so; but although my mother makes it of importance,

it is none to me. I have been but so so as a husband; and, by my conscience, nothing in earth will ever induce me to institute any proceedings against Lady Sandyford."

"That's a vera contrite sentiment of your Lordship, and comes, or am mista'en, from the bottom of the heart; but surely, my Lord, ye wouldna like your estates, and the honours of all your Lordship's ancient and famous progenitors, to go to the base blood of a stranger."

"I thought, Wylie," said the Earl coldly, "that you had been more the friend of Lady Sandyford. I am sure that she always treated you with kindness."

"With the height of discretion, I maun aye allow that," replied our hero; "and far be it from my thoughts or intent to advise any harm either to the name or dignity of the Countess, whom I canna believe to have been playing ony plasket. A' that I meant your Lordship to understand was, supposing, just by way of premises to confer upon, that the Countess had done the deed, and was as black as your Leddy-mother and her gallant the

Doctor, fear, how would your Lordship propose that she should be treated ?"

" As the daughter of the Marquis of Avonside."

" Her father is a proud man, my Lord," resumed Andrew, " and will take care of that. But suppose she is the mother of the bairn—for to this length the suspicion, as I guess, runs—what would be your Lordship's pleasure then ?"

The Earl made no answer. He sat for some time silent; and then he rose, and walked thrice across the room. He was evidently grieved and perplexed. Wylie sat watching him with interest and sympathy.

The struggle lasted about five minutes, at the end of which his Lordship resumed his chair, and said, " I cannot tell you what I may do, nor can I imagine what I ought to do. But Lady Sandyford, whatever may have been her fault, has pride enough to prevent her from imposing a spurious heir on my earldom. The concealment with which she has covered the birth, if she is a mother, assures me that the attempt will never be made; so

that, even in a worldly point of view, I ought to make no stir in this business." And he sighed deeply, adding, "It is needless to disguise to you any longer, that I am more distressed than I seem."

"Really, my Lord, your case is a vera hard ane," replied our hero, deeply affected; "but no to dwell on the dark side o't, let us suppose noo, that, after all this hobbleshew and clash, it should turn out that the Countess is an innocent and an injured woman."

"You are destined to exalt, or to sink me for ever, in my own esteem!" exclaimed the Earl; "and you have put to me a question that I would, but durst not, ask myself. She left my house voluntarily, by the advice of her father."

His Lordship paused, and looked as if he expected that Andrew would say something; but he remained silent.

The Earl then said abruptly, "What do you think I ought to do? I cannot ask her back—She will be happier apart from me; and since we are in the tongues of the world, it is no longer expedient for us to assume counterfeit virtues."

"Truly, what your Lordship says is no without a glimmer of common sense; but in the way of a conjecture, let us take another supposition. What would your Lordship do, if my Leddy, of her own free grace, was to confess a fault for running awa wi' her father, and beg to be received home again?"

"Impossible!" exclaimed the Earl, with energy—"Impossible! Her pride could never stoop to such humiliation."

"I can see there is difficulty in the way. Howsoever, greater mountains have been removed without miracles. And your Lordship hasna said what you would do, supposing my suppose were to come to pass."

"It would, I suspect, Wylie," replied the Earl jocularly, "be rather an awkward meeting."

"Then you would consent to meet her Leddyship," said our hero slyly.

The Earl was startled at the unconscious disclosure he had made of his own feelings, while he admired the shrewdness of his counsellor; and said, with a free and sincere accent, "Wylie, it is in vain for me to equivocate with you. I do

not think the return of the Countess probable; and, therefore, have never considered how I should act on such an occurrence. Towards her I can bear no malice.—But you surprise me. However, I will say no more. Let this conversation, for the present, end."

"I thought," replied Andrew, with a degree of firmness which surprised the Earl, "that your Lordship had better notions of justice than to punish where perhaps you ought to make atonement."

His Lordship, who had risen during part of this conversation, took a chair as our hero uttered these words, and looked flushed with an angry confusion.

"My Lord," continued Andrew, observing his agitation, "there's none in the world hae such cause to speak the truth to your Lordship as I have. You have taken me by the hand, and led me out o' the slough of poverty, where I might have struggled and sunk—Ye hae placed me in the flowery pastures of prosperity, and ye shouldna be displeased at the humble ettling of my grati-

tude. If my Leddy has had her faults and deficiencies, your Lordship's own breast bears witness that ye have not yoursel been perfect.—But I am transgressing the bounds of discretion, in speaking in this manner to your Lordship. Nevertheless, my Lord, though I should offend, it will be my endeavour to serve your Lordship, as it is my duty to do, whatever your Lordship may say to the contrary; and to strive, by all honest means, to testify my sense of obligation for the kindness heaped upon me."

The Earl was petrified. There was an energy of tone, and a decision of character in this, which his Lordship had never experienced towards himself, nor did he imagine Andrew possessed half so much generous sensibility.

"Do you think," replied the Earl, thoughtfully, "that even were I disposed to wish for a reconciliation, Lady Sandyford might be averse to it?"

"I hope she has more sense, were your Lordship to entertain any such creditable wish. But, my Lord, she has been long an outcast, as it were,

from your affections. I cannot, therefore, venture to give your Lordship any reason to think that she may wish for a reconciliation. But as soon as I have made an experiment, I'll hae the greatest pleasure in letting you know the result, especially if it be favourable."

"You are too quick, Wylie," said the Earl coldly, "I did not express any solicitude on the subject. Judging from the past, I still continue of the same mind, that it is better for Lady Sandyford and me to remain as we are, than to live together as we have done."

"That's no to be denied," replied Andrew. "But it's to be hoped, that, were ye coming thegither again, it would be with better hopes, designs, and intents. Knowing, as ye now do, wherein the great strength of both your faults lies, ye would bear and forbear with more reciprocal indulgence. Ye couldna live the life ye have done, even though ye were both so ill-deedy as to try."

This characteristic touch made the Earl smile; and he said, "You are a singular being, and will have your own way."

In saying these words, the countenance of his Lordship was for a moment overcast, and the sudden flowing in of thoughts and feelings on his heart obliged him to leave the room. Andrew soon after pulled the bell, and requesting the carriage to be in readiness to convey him to Castle Rooksborough by day-light, was shewn to a bedroom. But it is necessary to revert, in the meantime, to the situation of Lady Sandyford.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CASTLE.

THE Countess, on sending off her letter, had returned to Elderbower, where she received the answer; the first shock of which almost overset her reason. She started from her seat, and wildly shaking her head and hands, ran and touched several articles in the room, as if to ascertain their reality, and that she was not in a dream. She was like a bird entangled in a snare, or a captive when first immured in his dungeon. She felt as if an invisible power, that would crush her to death, was closing in on all sides. She gasped, as if some enormous weight pressed upon her bosom, and for some minutes her mind was as the fury of a glowing furnace.

In the midst of this paroxysm, she made a vigorous effort to control her agitation, and succeeded. While distractedly pacing the room, she halted suddenly, and said, " Why do I yield to this consternation?—There is some error in all this—There is no conspiracy against me—I am innocent of the crime imputed—I will go at once to my Lord—I will relate the whole of what has happened—he has treated me as if I had no feeling—but he is a man of honour, and will not allow me to be injured unjustly."

When she had thus somewhat calmed the perturbation of her spirits, she ordered a post-chaise for Chastington-hall, and in the course of a few hours quitted Elderbower.

Before she had gained the second stage, she felt herself so much indisposed that she was obliged to stop, and go to bed. In the course of the night, however, she obtained some rest; and her spirits were so refreshed in the morning, that she arose with a cheerful alacrity to resume her journey to the residence of her husband.

After breakfast, a chaise for Chastington was

accordingly ordered, and she went to the door attended by the landlord, to hand her in. As she was on the point of ascending the steps of the carriage, her hand was eagerly seized by some one behind, and on looking round she beheld, with equal surprise and alarm, the pale and ghastly Ferrers.

"Ha!" exclaimed the Countess, horror-struck at his appearance; "How! when! what has brought you here?"

"I came last night, and I have been——" What he would have added was broken off by a shriek from the Countess, who fainted, and fell back into his arms.

Some time elapsed before she recovered, and when she opened her eyes in the apartment to which she had been carried, the first object they caught was Servinal, her Lord's valet, who, perceiving that she recognized him, instantly left the room, and, having a horse ready at the door, quitted the house. He was on his way to London, on some confidential business, but he returned to Chastington-hall with the news of this discovery.

As for Ferrers, still under the influence of insanity, believing he had been the cause of this unfortunate lady's death, he rushed from the house in a state of distraction, and was nowhere to be found.

When the Countess was so far recovered as to be able to speak, she ordered the chaise, which still stood at the door, to carry her to Burisland Abbey, where, immediately on her arrival, she sent for Flounce; and being determined now to avail herself of her father's offer of Bretonsbeild Castle, she dispatched, at the same time, one of the servants to apprize the domestics of her intention. All this was done with a force and precision of mind new to her character.

The singularity of the circumstances into which she had been placed with Ferrers, awakened in her a sort of superstitious dread. Their misfortunes seemed strangely and awfully mingled; and feeling herself unaccountably and darkly connected with the desperate fortunes of a frantic man, she believed herself a passive agent in the hands of Fate, and trembled to think that she was thus

united to some tremendous and immeasurable movement of the universe. There was sublimity in the fancies that rose with this notion; and the place where she had determined to take up her abode was well calculated to cherish the solemn associations connected with her Promethean resolution, to retire from the world, and there await the issue of that scheme of destiny with which she was so mysteriously involved.

Bretonsbield Castle was a pile of unknown antiquity. From the earliest periods of our national history, it had been remarkable, both on account of its massy architecture, and the sullen and stern solitariness in which it stood. The Saxons had added to its strength, and the Normans had enlarged the sweep of the walls, and the number of the towers. In the chivalric times of the heroic Plantagenets, it acquired some ornamental appendages; and, in the first reign of the Stuarts, it lost some of the features of a mere strong-hold in a suite of magnificent apartments, of an airy and fantastic style, which, however, still harmonized with the rude grandeur of the general edifice.

The road to it lay along the acclivity of an extensive common, and by a gentle ascent attained the summit of the downs, from which, on the one hand, the country below presented a wide and magnificent prospect, extending to the horizon; while, on the other, an open and lonely waste spread out to a great distance, in which no other object was visible but the castle, rising from the midst of a dark mass of fir trees.

The scene suited the disposition of Lady Sandyford's mind; and it seemed to her that a spot in which the wild, the old, and the magnificent, were so united, was a fit theatre for the exercise of the courage and endurance which she was determined to exercise.

But far different were the reflections of her waiting gentlewoman; according to her own account, when the carriage reached the brow of the downs, and she saw nothing before her but a desert waste, she felt as if a magician was carrying her away on the back of a fiery dragon, to the well at the world's end.

As the carriage drove into the silent court of

the Castle, like a peal of thunder, the Countess said, as it stopped at the entrance to the hall, "What an awful place it is!" and she cast her eyes apprehensively round on the ivy-mantled towers, the hoary walls, and the lichen-furred pinnacles.

"Yes," replied Flounce,

> "It chills the suspended soul,
> Till expectation wears the cast of fear,
> And fear, half ready to become devotion,
> Mumbles a kind of mental orison
> It knows not wherefore."

"Why, Flounce!" exclaimed her astonished Lady, "where got you that language?"

"It is a beautiful sentiment," said that erudite gentlewoman, "which I learnt by rote from one of Mrs Radcliff's romances. It will be quite charming, my Lady, to read them in this delightful Udolpho; and I hope your Ladyship will make a point of having them sent from town."

As none of the servants were in attendance, the Countess desired the post-boys to open the door, and, alighting with Flounce, walked into the hall. The housekeeper, and her husband the

gardener, were indeed all the domestics that the Marquis of Avonside kept at this place; and it happened, when the carriage drove up to the door, that they were in a remote part of the Castle.

The Countess halted when she had reached the middle of the hall, and surveyed it in silence. It was lofty, and of stately dimensions—lighted from the one side by two tall narrow windows; the space between which was occupied by a huge arched chimney, with massy antique iron dogs for burning wood; and great piles of billets at each side of the hearth, shewed something like the habitude of ancient hospitality. A small claw-footed table, on which stood a basket of linen and old stockings, with a pair of scissars, a thimble, and thread-paper, lying around as they had been left by the housekeeper, occupied, with two old-fashioned gnarled elbow-chairs, the niche of one of the windows. The walls were of dark and small pannelled wainscot, on which hung four or five family portraits that time had almost effaced. The aspect of the whole apartment was gaunt and venerable, but it could not be altogether said that the effect

was either desolate or melancholy. But this was less owing to the style and architecture of the room than to the superb prospect which the windows commanded. The Castle stood on the brink of a shaggy precipice; and the side where the windows were placed, overlooked a wide expanse of one of the richest tracts of England, on which the sun at the time was shedding the golden radiance of the afternoon. Woodlands, parks, villas, and towns, lay scattered in beautiful diversity to the utmost verge of the horizon; and here and there the steeple of a country church pointing to heaven, might be seen rising from the middle of a grove, crowned with a glittering star, the effect of the setting sun on the gilded weather-cock; while broad and bright, with all their windows glancing as if illuminated, several large mansions studded, as it were, like gems, the bosom of that magnificent landscape. "Our ancestors," said the Countess to Florence, "did not lack taste in the choice of situations. Their captives, with such a spacious view before them, could scarcely feel the loss of liberty."

At this moment the old housekeeper entered;

and apologizing for her accidental absence, opened a pair of folding-doors at the upper end of the Hall, and conducted the Countess through the long suite of state-apartments to a small drawing-room in an octagon tower, which commanded seven different views from as many small windows. "I have brought your Ladyship to this place," said Mrs Scrubwell, "because it was the favourite room of the Marchioness your mother; and I thought, on that account, you would be pleased with it."

"You have judged rightly," replied her Ladyship with emotion; and she mentally ejaculated, "My mother!—How wofully I now feel that loss!"

CHAPTER V.

INEXPERIENCE.

At break of day, our hero was afoot and dressed for his mission to the Rose and Crown, at Castle-Rooksborough; but instead of waiting for the carriage to come up to the portal of the Hall, he walked out to the court of offices, which stood at some distance from the mansion.

It was a beautiful spring morning. The mavis, the blackbird, and the linnet, were beginning to chirp and churm over their young in the bowers, but the lark was already at heaven's gate singing her matins. The sun had not yet risen, and the dew-drops lay like pearls on the grass and leaves; a cheerful and refreshed composure was diffused over the whole face of the landscape, and

the forehead of the sky appeared unusually spacious and beautiful; a few grey flakes of vapour scattered over it, seemed to float at an unwonted elevation, as they gradually brightened into the full glory of the morning.

The reflections of Andrew were in unison with the beneficent aspect of Nature, and he loitered with the sense of beauty glowing at his heart, often turning round as the different windings of the road unfolded, through the massy groups of foliage, the diversified scenery of the surrounding country.

By the time he reached the entrance to the stables, the carriage was coming out. "Ha'd your han', my lad," he cried to the coachman, "ye needna gang to the house, I'll e'en step in here."

"As you please," replied the coachman; "but Tom Berry is not yet come."

"And wha's Tam Berry?"

"The footman, sir, that is to go with us."

"Loup your ways doun, and let me into the chaise. I'll no be fashed wi' ony sic ceremo-

nials. A' that I want is a fast drive, without couping."

The coachman obeyed, and long before Tom Berry had opened the shutters of his eyes, half the journey was performed.

At a public-house within two miles of Castle-Rooksborough, our hero stopped the carriage, and told the coachman to wait for him there.

"Your horses, my lad," said he, "will be nane the waur o' a rest; and I'll just step on by mysel."

"But," replied the charioteer, "my orders were to take you to the Rose and Crown."

"I'll not dispute what your orders were; nevertheless, ye'll bide here; or if ye maun corn your cattle at the Rose and Crown, and at no other place, I canna help it; only ye'll serve my Lord's turn better by minding what I bid you."

"It don't make no difference to me," said the coachman; "and so be as you doesn't wish for the contrary, I'd as lief bait where we now be."

"Hear ye," cried Andrew, stopping suddenly, after he had alighted, and was walking away,

seemingly as if he had recollected something. "I hope ye'll say naething to the folk about the inns here, concerning my business?"

"I knows nought o't, sir—I was but told to fetch you here."

"Then," replied our hero, "ye'll oblige me by keeping your finger on your mouth, for it might be detrimental if ony thing were to spunk out."

"Never doubt me, sir—I have been bred and born in his Lordship's service, as my father was in his father's, so I may be trusted; and I never speaks of any body's consequences, but only minds my own servitude."

"I had a notion that ye were a prudent lad," said Wylie; "what do they ca' you?"

"My name, sir, is Snaffle—Jack Snaffle."

"Weel, Jock, I hae great dependence on your sagacity, and there's a sixpence to you for a chappin o' strong yill, till I come back. But mind, and dinna say ony thing in the tap-room, when ye're drinking and smoking your pipe wi' ithers, anent my coming to speir the price o' growing

trees in this neighbourhood—and noo that I hae better thought on't, ye needna let on about my coming from the Hall at a', but pass me off as a by-hand job."

The coachman being thus set upon a wrong scent, supposed that Andrew had some interest in the sale of the timber then felling at Chastington; for, not belonging to the establishment of Sandyford-house, in London, he knew little of the domestic concerns of the family, and nothing whatever of the footing on which our hero was treated by his master.

Having in this manner got himself extricated from the embarrassment of the carriage, Andrew walked forward to the Rose and Crown alone, and, upon his arrival, instead of going into the house, went to the tap, and ordered breakfast.

Among the waiters, hostlers, and post-boys, several labourers were assembled, and the burthen of the conversation among them was the ruin of Ferrers, interspersed with conjectures as to the cause of his late strange visit to the Castle, and observations on the extravagance of his behaviour.

The subject was interesting to Andrew, and it became particularly so, in consequence of one of the waiters remarking, that the Lady's child, as they called Monimia, the orphan, was exceedingly like him. This observation was not, however, altogether attributable to the discernment of the waiter; for it seems that Flounce had, in the excursion with her Lady, more than hinted to one of the chambermaids, that she should not be surprised if the unknown lady was Mr Ferrers' daughter, for it was as like him as a kitten to a cat; and the chambermaid had frequently expressed her admiration of the resemblance, until a very general persuasion of the fact was entertained among all the servants of the house.

It is certainly much to be regretted, that people do not always act with the most perfect reason and good sense. But if they did so, there would be an end to every thing romantic in life; and therefore, perhaps, it is as well, after all, that there is a little folly in the world, a blessing which we sometimes think was bestowed to produce amusement. The

reflections on the Lady's child, and its resemblance to Ferrers, had the effect of inducing our hero to change his original intention of sifting the mystery at Castle-Rooksborough, and to adopt another, calculated, as he thought, to bring the business to a more speedy conclusion; and assuredly it would have done so, had there not been other causes at work, the force and effect of which he could neither counteract nor foresee.

The construction that he put upon the unfortunate manner in which the orphan was mentioned, namely, "the Lady's child," led him to conclude that the real circumstances of its birth were not to be ascertained at that place, and he resolved to proceed directly to Elderbower, and have an explanation with Lady Sandyford herself.

This determination undoubtedly originated in motives of delicacy towards her Ladyship; for the coarse remarks of the persons around him, with respect to the unfortunate Ferrers, had the effect to make him feel an extreme repugnance to enter into any conversation with them. He ac-

cordingly sent a messenger to the inn where he had left the carriage, to order it back to Chastington-hall, and when the London coach came up, he mounted the roof, and was conveyed to Elderbower.

CHAPTER VI.

AT FAULT.

Our hero reached the mansion of the Dowager about an hour too late. Flounce, in obedience to the summons of her mistress, had quitted the house and gone to join her at Burisland Abbey; whence, as we have related, they proceeded to Britonsbeild Castle. The servants were still in all the quandary and agitation which belonged, among them, to the unexpected and unexplained nature of that event. And Andrew, on inquiring at the gate for the Countess, was informed that they knew nothing of her. This intelligence mortified him exceedingly; and he stood for some time in a state of stupefaction, occasioned by the repulsive tone in which it was given. He, however, soon rallied, and endeavoured to enter into conversa-

tion with John Luncheon, the footman, who had answered the gate bell; but his questions were so gruffly dismissed, that he was utterly at a loss how to proceed. At last he mustered self-possession enough to say, "I have come from my Lord at Chastington-hall on most particular business with my Leddy; but really what ye say is very confounding."

Upon hearing this, John gave him immediate admittance, and conducted him to Mrs Polisher.

"What's a' this amang you?" said he to her as soon as the footman had left the room. "Whar's Leddy Sandyford, or that glaikit clatter-stoup, Flounce, her maiden? I would fain see the tane or the t'other."

"As for that," replied the decorous housekeeper, "it is impossible to give you any satisfaction. The day before yesterday, the Countess, as I must continue to call her till my Lord instructs us to the contrary, left this in a post-chaise alone for Chastington-hall."

"That's no to be credited," cried Andrew, petrified at the news; "for I left it this morning, and she wasna there."

"Ah, well we know that," said Mrs Polisher;

"she went but two stages, where, feigning to be indisposed, she stopped; and next morning the fellow Ferrers came to the inn where she then was."

Andrew drew in his breath, as if he had been pierced in the most sensitive part with some acute instrument, and then gave a long and deep puff of his breath, as if inwardly suffering the greatest corporeal anguish.

"Then," continued the house-keeper, "such a tragical scene took place, on her stepping into the carriage after bidding Mr Ferrers farewell, as never was witnessed. She fainted cold dead, and he ran off in a state of distraction, and some think he has made away with himself."

"All this," said our hero, "is most prodigious; but how came you to hear so many particulars?"

"Why, the fact cannot be questioned," exclaimed Mrs Polisher a little sharply, at hearing any shade of doubt cast on her information. "Mr Servinal himself happened to come up to the inn door at the critical moment; and on seeing what took place, clapped spurs to his horse, and galloped back to Chastington-hall, to inform his master of this most scandalous discovery."

"But how did you hear it?—Who gallopped here with this black story?—That's what I wish to know," said Andrew in a peevish accent, distressed, and almost angry, he knew not why.

"Oh!" cried the housekeeper, "ill tidings are fast travellers. The chaise which her Ladyship had ordered for Chastington before she was detected by Mr Servinal, as soon as her fellow was off, knowing it was all over with her character, she ordered round to Burisland Abbey, where she now is; and her slippery nymph, Flounce, has gone there with their bags and baggage. The postboys who drove her told the whole story to the Avonsides, and the groom, who came to fetch Flounce, told our men; so there is no dubious possibility in the matter. The only thing that has consternated me in the business is, how our Lady Sandyford was so blind as not to see through the craftiness of the plot. But I take great blame to myself for concealing from her what everybody in the house knew so well."

"And what was that?" inquired Andrew sorrowfully, quite overcome to find his good opinion of the Countess so utterly wrecked.

"The child.—The two good-for-nothings had not been here above three or four days till I found all out—where the brat was at nurse, and what beautiful clothes were so clandestinely sent to it," said Mrs Polisher; adding, in a tone of exultation at having so completely established what she deemed the truth, "And the creature Flounce, in her hurry, has left behind, a portrait of Ferrers, which we all know, for we have seen him often. I have it, and will deliver it to my Lord."

"Weel," ejaculated Andrew, with a sigh, "I have come a gowk's errand; and what am I to do next?"

At first an indescribable impulse of compassion, interest, and curiosity, prompted him to visit the Countess at Burisland Abbey; for still, but it was only for a moment, he thought there might be some mistake in the story; but the tissue of circumstances was so strong, that he could not resist it; and he almost instantly resolved to return without delay to Chastington-hall, in order to ascertain the whole extent of the derogatory discovery which he was led to believe Servinal had made. On quitting Elderbower, however, he re-

flected that his services could no longer be of any use to the Earl; and that under the disagreeable circumstances which had come to light, it would be more discreet to return at once to town. Accordingly, he proceeded straight to the Nag's-head, where he engaged a place in the London coach, and wrote a brief but characteristic note to the Earl, to the effect, that finding he had been all in the wrong, he could do no better than go home to Mr Vellum's work; his only consolation being that he had been actuated by the best intentions.

When his Lordship received this note, he read it over several times. He perceived that the information which Andrew had obtained was in unison with the discovery that Servinal had supposed he had made; and he had no doubt that it was perfectly true, and of the most afflicting kind. He affected, however, to speak of it to his mother lightly, and he praised the delicacy which dictated Andrew's letter and resolution to return directly to London; but she soon saw the profound effect which it had produced, and trembled for the consequences. For although he seemingly in nothing

changed the daily routine of his recreations, she could discern that there was a self-exertion about him that was wholly at variance with the easy air he affected; and several times, when he seemed to be only reading at the table, she observed his eyes to wander vacantly round the room, and a tear drop upon the unnoticed page. More than once she began to speak with him on the subject of his concealed sorrow, but he either broke away from her abruptly, or exclaimed, with a sharp accent of vexation, "For Heaven's sake spare me; I cannot endure to think of what has passed!"

One afternoon he seemed to have recovered his wonted serenity, but there was a tone of solemnity and sadness in his voice which filled the maternal breast of the Dowager with boding and dread; and when, in the course of the evening, he happened incidentally to remark that he considered himself as the cause of his wife's ruin, she was struck with a feeling of horror and alarm; especially when, in attempting to palliate the reflection that dictated this sentiment, she hinted at the selfish disposition which the Countess had always shewn. "Do not blame her," he exclaimed; "I was a fool not

to have seen her true character from the beginning. I know not why I was so besotted as to believe, that under her artificial manners I saw the latent principles and essence of worth, and virtues, and sensibilities.—Heavens, what a wretch I have been, if she did indeed possess any such qualities!" And rising from his seat, he rushed wildly out of the room.

CHAPTER VII.

A SCIENTIFIC BARONET.

For some time after the Earl of Sandyford's departure from London, his friend Mordaunt remained anxious and indecisive respecting his own matrimonial concerns. The Baronet still so strictly adhered to his determination, that Julia should marry Birchland, that it was found alike impracticable to work upon his feelings or his reason. He had given his word, and that pledge he was resolved to redeem.

Having exhausted every other resource of influence and persuasion, Mordaunt at last recollected what the Earl said to him about our hero, whose address and sagacity had indeed left a favourable impression on his own mind. But

there was something in the appearance of Andrew not altogether satisfactory to the pride of Mordaunt; and although he was inclined to consult him, he did not very clearly perceive in what manner his services could be rendered available.

However, soon after Andrew's return to London, having sent for him to breakfast, in order to inquire respecting the unfortunate situation of Lord and Lady Sandyford, in the course of their conversation he several times became thoughtful, and alluded inadvertently to his own matrimonial prospects, with doubt and anxiety. This, in one instance, was so particular, that our hero could not help remarking that he seemed troubled; and from one thing to another, Mordaunt at last opened his mind, describing the perplexity arising from the intractable character of Sir Thomas Beauchamp; at the same time expressing his regret, that the circumstances of Lord Sandyford should have been such as to deprive him of his powerful assistance, to influence, if possible, the paternal feelings of the Baronet.

Andrew sat for some time silent; at last he

said, "I canna understan' what's the need o' a' this fasherie; for surely, if the lad and the lass are baith willing, they may soon come thegither."

"But," replied Mordaunt, "there are two things to be considered; first, the obligation which Sir Thomas conceives he is under to Birchland, and Miss Beauchamp's fortune. If she marry without her father's consent, I am persuaded he will cut her off with a shilling."

"It would be very dure o' the auld carl, were he to do the like o' that. But as for his promise, that's but wind o' the mouth, and breath o' the nostril. The siller, however, is a deevil. I'm thinking that a fortune's no to be made, even by matrimony, without trouble. But no to mince the matter, what does the leddy hersel say? Will she rin awa wi' you?"

Mordaunt laughed, and replied, the case was not so desperate.

"Toot, toot!" exclaimed Andrew; "ye ken vera weel that I didna mean that she was to gallop, stridling on a horse, wi' you in a pock before her, like a cadger wi' a smuggled keg o' brandy,

or a butcher wi' a calf frae the fair. But to speak proper English, if we maun be on our prejincks, will you an' her baith rin awa thegither?"

"No," replied Mordaunt; "that is the difficulty. She will not consent to take any such disgraceful step."

"I'm thinking then, sir, that you should strain a point to get her; for an that's her mind, she'll mak you a vera decent wife."

"Well," cried Mordaunt; "but how is the point to be strained?"

"I'll gang and speak to Sir Thomas," said Andrew. "I would hear what he has to say anent the matter. Let me ken the rights o' the case first, and then aiblins it may be in my capacity to help you."

"Depend upon't, Mr Wylie," said Mordaunt, "that any interference of a stranger with Sir Thomas will only make matters worse. He's a thorough self-willed round-head, and can only be dealt with by letting him have his own way."

"If he thinks he has it, won't that do as weel, sir?—Mr Mordaunt, an ye put your concerns

into my hands, ye maun just let me tak my ain gait, or I'll only ravel them by my meddling. Is Sir Thomas at hame, think ye, even noo?"

"Surely," exclaimed Mordaunt, in a tone of alarm, "you would not rush to him at once on the business?"

"Dinna fash your head about my ways and means, sir. Are nae ye wud for your wedding? what for would ye put obstacles and delays to your ain pleasure? I'll go to him outright; so just sit ye whar ye are till I come back. It's easier to excuse an ill deed, than to gie satisfactory reasons beforehand for the doing o' a good one. Therefore, Mr Mordaunt, sit still; an' if ye hae nae other playock, try it ye can persuade the cat to stand on her hind legs till I come back."—And in saying these words, our hero, with a smirking nod, whisked out of the room, leaving Mordaunt equally astonished at his humour and familiarity—distrusting his prudence, while he admired his promptitude.

Andrew went directly to Sir Thomas's; and, on the servant telling the Baronet that a young man desired to speak with him on very particular business, he at once obtained an audience.

Sir Thomas was a tall, meagre, hard-favoured personage, verging towards his grand climacteric. He had little of the general appearance of a country gentleman, except in the freshness of his complexion; indeed, he had never cared much for field sports, nor for those kind of exercises, so contributory to that hearty obstreperous corpulency, which is commonly deemed the most remarkable characteristic of the regular members of a county quorum. The Baronet, in fact, was, in his own opinion, a man of science; but whether he excelled most in botany, mechanics, chemistry, astronomy, mathematics, or metaphysics, he had never ascertained, having no neighbours who understood even the meaning of the terms. But undoubtedly his proficiency must have been very extraordinary; for he had several times read all the books in his library which related to these sciences, amounting to nearly a hundred volumes, part of the collection of his maternal ancestor, Dr Gropingwit, who flourished in the Augustan reign of Queen Anne,—as Sir Thomas often said of him, "A most learned man, having been one of the contemporaries of the great Sir Isaac New-

ton."—To this collection, the Baronet himself had made no additions; judiciously observing, when any new book relative to his private studies was accidentally mentioned, "Those that drink at the fountain-head can never relish the waters of the polluted stream." And then he was wont to spout with a sounding voice, and a most tragical emphasis, both of look and gesture, the following verses from Chaucer:—

> "Out of the old fieldes, as man saith,
> Cometh the new corn fro year to year;
> And out of old books, in good faith,
> Cometh all new science, that men lere."

His favourite passage, however, from the poets, was the opening to Young's Night Thoughts, which he repeated sometimes on a Sunday evening to his sister Miss Lucretia, with so much slow solemnity, that sleep, in *propria persona*, generally paid her a visit before he got to the cadence of

> "Lights on lids unsullied with a tear."

At the close of which, he was wont to give an awful stroke on the table, as with the melancholious hand of Fate; and Miss Lucretia as regularly then awoke, and said, "Brother, what's the clock?"

To this he as regularly replied, with a smile of compassion,

> "We take no note of time.
> To give it then a tongue was wise in man."

But lifting his watch from the table at his elbow, he subjoined, "Ring for tea."

CHAPTER VIII.

A REMONSTRANCE.

ANDREW, when shewn into the Baronet's parlour, was rather startled at his appearance. Sir Thomas was reading in an arm-chair, with his feet on the fender; his clothes had been hastily huddled on—a condition that could not be altogether fairly attributed to having hurriedly dressed himself on account of the sharpness of the weather, for in all seasons he breakfasted in that state, and sat till about twelve o'clock. His stockings were loose, his knees unbuttoned, his neckcloth untied, and a slovenly grey duffle morning-coat carelessly invested the generality of his figure; while an old fur cap had succeeded his night-cap, and was destined, when the sun passed the meridian, to be supplanted in its turn by a wig.

"Well, friend," said he to Andrew, looking over his shoulder as he entered the room, "what are your commands?"

"I hae something that I would say to you," replied our hero; and he glanced at the venerable Miss Lucretia, who was sitting on the opposite side of the fire, busily employed in examining the weekly bills of the family. This look, if Sir Thomas had observed it, was meant to intimate a wish that the lady might be requested to favour them with her absence; but it was unnoticed, and Andrew continued, "I believe, sir, ye hae some acquaintance with Mr Mordaunt."

"I know the gentleman," replied the Baronet, closing the book, and looking from under his spectacles as if he expected something interesting.

"He's a worthy gentleman," said Andrew, "and I am sure has a great respec for you, and would do ony thing to oblige you in his power."

"Hem!" ejaculated the Baronet; and Miss Lucretia looked askance from her household bills towards the sly advocate. "But what's the drift of all this, young man?" inquired Sir Thomas, laying his book on the table, and taking off his spectacles.

"Nothing particular, Sir Thomas; but only as he's a good frien' to me, I wish him weel, and would fain hope that things are no past remedy between him and you; for if that's the case, he's a gone dick—a dead man, as the saying is, and I doubt his death-ill will lie at your door, Sir Thomas."

The Baronet looked in some degree of amazement; and Miss Lucretia, in her turn, glanced her inquisitive eyes first at our hero, and then on her brother.

Andrew saw their anxiety, and concluded that Sir Thomas meant to signify he thought him insane, for he observed him touching his forehead as he ocularly replied to Miss Lucretia's ocular interrogation. However, none disconcerted, he intrepidly continued, "But I'm sure, Sir Thomas, that it's no in your nature to harm the hair o' a dog, far less a gentleman that has a great regard for you and all your family; especially for your dochter Miss Julia."

Miss Lucretia abandoned the investigation of her bills, and, pushing back her chair from the table, sat in upright astonishment. The Baronet's

under-lip fell down, and it would be difficult to say whether his eyes or mouth most strongly expressed the wondering of his spirit.

"Ye maunna be surprised, Sir Thomas, at what I'm saying, for it's a truth that Mr Mordaunt's in a state of great distress o' mind, and he's my friend, and I canna but try to serve him. But he says, Sir Thomas, you're such a man of your word, that I have no hope ye'll ever consent to give him your dochter. To that, however, sir, I answered, that surely ye were a rational man, and would hearken to rationality."

"What's your name?" inquired the Baronet.

"My name's Andrew Wylie."

"And did Mr Mordaunt send you to speak on the subject to me?" resumed Sir Thomas.

"No, sir; he was confounded when I offered to come; but better to hae a finger off than ay aching. There was nae need that he should pine ony langer in pain, or you, Sir Thomas, live in anxiety, lest Miss Julia and him should rin awa' to Gretna-Green; for the sic like has been before. I'm sure this sensible leddy here kens that ye're running a dreadful risk of an elopement."

"I know nothing about it," exclaimed Miss Lucretia, with an indignant snort.

"Nae offence, madam, I hope," replied Andrew; "but I'm vera sure ye wouldna, ony mair than Sir Thomas himsel, like to see Miss Julia and Mr Mordaunt jehuing awa' in a chaise and four, and you and her father flying like twa desperate tigers after them, and no able to catch them."

"Why, friend," said the Baronet, "this seems to be a very singular interference on your part—I don't understand it. How came Mr Mordaunt to consult you in an affair of this sort?"

"Ye wouldna, Sir Thomas, hae me to be my ain trumpeter?" replied our hero, significantly.

"Then, to put an end to the business at once, my word is pledged to Mr Birchland."

"So Mr Mordaunt said. But ye maun just break your word, Sir Thomas, for a broken word's naething to a broken heart."

"I tell you, friend, that I will hear nothing farther on this subject," replied the Baronet.

"We'll hae twa words about that, Sir Thomas. I dinna think noo, Baronet, that ye're just such

a contumacious man as to be out o' the reach o' reason a' thegither, or I wouldna speak to you as I do, but help the lad and lass to be man and wife wi' a' expedient ability. Therefore, Sir Thomas, ye maun consider this matter with a cool and a sound mind, an ye hae ony pretensions to gumshon at a'; for it's no past the bounds o' probability that some morning or lang ye may rant and ring for your dochter, whiskit awa' wi' the Gaberlunzie, an ye continue in this contrarie disposition."

"Does Mordaunt mean to force me in this manner to give my consent?" said the Baronet, angrily.

"I'm sure," replied Andrew, "that I see nae forcing about it. But if ye will gar your dochter marry a man she doesna like, what comfort will ye get frae your dure word of honour, an ye hear, in less than a week after the wedding, a' the big wigs o' Doctors' Commons in a commotion?"

"The insinuation is insulting to my daughter's honour and principles!" exclaimed the Baronet, wrathfully.

"Vera true; but, Sir Thomas, ye ken mar-

riages are made in heaven, and it's plainly ordain't that Miss Julia and Mr Mordaunt were trysted there by their mutual affection; and ye're fighting against the laws o' God when ye would try to set aside this natural attraction or affinity o' their spirits."

This touched the philosophy of the Baronet, and opened to him a view of the subject that had never presented itself to him before, and he said, "Are you acquainted with the Newtonian philosophy?"

"'Deed no, sir; I never fash my head wi' sic havers; for if a man's void o' common sense, I wonder what the wiser he'll be wi' philosophy. Can philosophy mend a club-foot, or put understanding in a toom head—I doubt no. Truly, sir, it behoves you to think on what I hae said. Firstly, there may be an elopement; secondly, there may be worse; and thirdly, and assuredly, one way or another, there will be a broken heart, and the sin and blame o' a' will rest on your head. Talk o' words o' honour in a case like this?—What's a word o' honour mair than ony ither word? It's just wind, Sir Thomas; and if ye'll

tak my advice, the sooner ye break it, ye'll be the easier. O, Sir Thomas, ye look like a man that has something fatherly in you! But think o' auld doited Jeptha; what did he get by his rash vow? What consolation was it to him to see his lovely daughter lying in her winding-sheet? Words o' honour, Sir Thomas?—Snuffs o' tobacco. But I'll say nae mair at present, I see ye're prickit. Oh, Sir Thomas, Sir Thomas! there's nae plaister for a wounded conscience, nor solder for a broken heart. It will be an awfu' thing when ye lie down to die, to think o' the shame or misery o' your only daughter; and that but for your own outstrapalous obstinacy, ye might hae left her in felicity, or been laying your hand in prayer on the heads o' her bonny wee bairnies, a' greeting like bleeting lambies at your bed-side. Think o' that, Sir Thomas—think o' that; and if ye can then set yourself up against the laws o' God and nature wi' your daft words o' honour, I ken mysel what's the name that will best fit you."

The ascendancy which our hero here assumed, and unconsciously felt, produced a profound effect on the Baronet's mind and heart. He rose from

his seat and walked across the room; he halted and looked at Andrew; he then seemed to turn his thoughts inwardly, and again he paused. "Tell Mr Mordaunt," at last he said, "to come to me."

"That's a man," exclaimed Andrew; "noo ye're like yoursel, Baronet; gladly will I tell Mr Mordaunt,—so I wish you a vera good morning. Ye see, madam, what it is to hae a kind heart like Sir Thomas; it's the source o' a' delight and comfort in this world, begetting friends and quenching foes.—Good morning to you again, Sir Thomas, and to you too, madam." And with this our hero quitted the room, and sped with what speed he could to inform Mordaunt of the happy result of his visit.

CHAPTER IX.

ENCOURAGEMENT.

A FEW days after this interview, Andrew found a letter from his grandmother, which the master had written to her dictation. It related chiefly to some small matters that she was sending; but it contained a postscript from Tannyhill himself, which gave him more pleasure—he could not tell why—than even the affectionate spirit which breathed through the other simple sentences.

Mary Cunningham, who by this time had returned a full-blown young lady from Edinburgh to the Craiglands, in her walks round the village, often called at the cottage, and jocundly chatted with old Martha about Wheelie, as she still continued to call him; and, at the time when the master was employed as amanuensis on this

letter, she happened to come in. On being told for whom the letter was intended, she said, in her light and sprightly way, "Give my compliments, and say I am still waiting, and that he must do all he can to make his great fortune soon, or maybe I'll change my mind. Say, I'll no have him unless he come in his own coach and four."

The master was amused with the freedom of the playful rattle, and literally wrote down the message as it had been delivered, adding, from himself, by way of news, "William Cunningham, her brother, has gone into the army, much to the grief and displeasure of his aunt, who regarded him as the last of the male line of the family. As for the Laird," continued the master, "he's just daunering about the doors in his old way, with his hands, as you first noticed, in his pouches; but he's a blameless bodie, and since his last increase by the renewed tacks of the Braehead, and the Louping-stane farms, he has been very kind to the poor—having divided five load of victual among all the needful in the parish."

While our hero was reading this epistle, Charles Pierston chanced to call, and said, on hearing the

paragraph,—for he had now begun to speak with an English accent,—"Why, this is frank enough?"

"Hoot, Charlie," replied Andrew, "ye ken very weel I durst never even mysel to Craigland's only daughter, and ye may see through her blethers, that she's making a fool o' me—na, na, man—Mary Cunningham's setting her cap for a soldier-officer in gold lace. The very sight of sic a puddock as me in the capacity of a jo, would gar her kick me ower on my back wi' her tae."

"Love is blind," replied Pierston; "and who knows but she may think you a likely handsome fellow."

"If she did," cried Andrew, half seriously, "I would think her a terrible tawpy—and I'm sure I would as soon stick a rose in my bosom wi' a kailworm in't, as take the bonniest lass that ever was seen for my wife, that could be guilty o' ony sic havril fancy."

From the time that our hero had been invited to Sandyford-house, Charles had remarked a change in his deportment, for which he could not account, Andrew never having mentioned either that circumstance or the masquerade. It had,

however, the effect of producing a feeling of deference to his opinions, which he could not overcome. Wylie bore his raillery as gaily as ever, but there was a self-command, and a pith in some of his observations, which begot a respect that unconsciously made Charles feel himself the inferior, in spite of all his fashionable dash and figure. This feeling, however, was unmixed with any of that invidious alloy, which the secret sense of inferiority commonly produces in mean and sordid minds; for Pierston was naturally frank-hearted, and there was something in the character of his friend which he liked, even while he could not restrain his disposition to laugh at him.

Why a youth in Andrew's station should have concealed from his companion the honour conferred on him by Lord Sandyford, we shall not attempt to explain. It may be that he thought Charles would suspect that he had been invited merely to make amusement—a humiliating consideration—or, perhaps, judging from the ambitious love of show in his friend, he might apprehend that he would teaze him to procure his admission to the same fashionable parties. In either

case his silence was prudent; and if the result of the latter consideration, it did credit to his sagacity. But this is an abstruse subject, and it is quite enough for us to state the fact; and also, that for some other good and substantial reason best known to himself, Andrew also as carefully concealed from Charles the amount of the extraordinary salary which the Earl had so generously obtained for him. This circumstance occasioned Pierston, after the observation which we have quoted, to say, "By the way, Andrew, you have never told me the amount of 'the wage,' as you call it, which has enabled you to be so liberal to your grandmother—How much is it?"

"It's no under a hundred pounds," replied Andrew, apparently in a careless manner.

"I doubt," said Charles, "if it do not greatly exceed, the coach and four will be long of coming forward."

Andrew laughed, and said, "A plack wi' me, Charlie, will aye gang as far as a pound wi' you—and I'm no fear't."

"True," cried Pierston; "for I have no

Mary Cunningham to make me grip and gather."

"Now, Charlie," again exclaimed Andrew, a little pettishly, "I dinna like that—an I were her equal ye might crack your jokes, but it's no a friend's turn to tell me in that gait, that poverty has debarred me from looking so high, even though I had been as braw and as crouse as yoursel."

"Upon my conscience," replied Pierston, laughing, "I had no notion ye were so far gone. The fellow's honestly and simply in love."

Andrew reddened, and said sharply, "An I were sae, which I am not, ye might spare me your jeers, considering the impossibilities between us."

"Poo, poo!" cried Charles. "Faint heart never won fair lady,—and wit, which you do not want, both in the stratagems of love and war, is worth a well-turned leg."

"Wha taught you to proverb sae glibbly the auld tale o' Beauty and the Beast?" said Andrew, not displeased by the observation. "But, Charlie, to make an end o' a' debate on the subject,

ye'll really oblige me by never speaking o' Mary Cunningham; for ye ken as well as I do, that no lassie would be so free wi' ony young lad, if she had the least spunk of affection for him."

"Well, well," exclaimed Pierston, "but get twenty thousand pounds as fast as ye can, and then away to the Craiglands, where, if ye speak auld crabbit Miss Mizy fair, I'll bet ten to one that there have been more hopeless speculations than your chance with Mary."

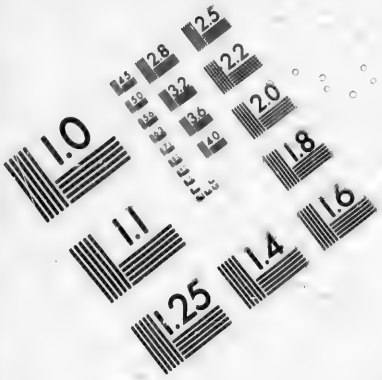
Andrew made no answer for some time to this, but sat pursing his mouth for about a minute, when he said, "She wouldna tak me wi' twenty thousand pounds, and that's mair than I can noo hope for."

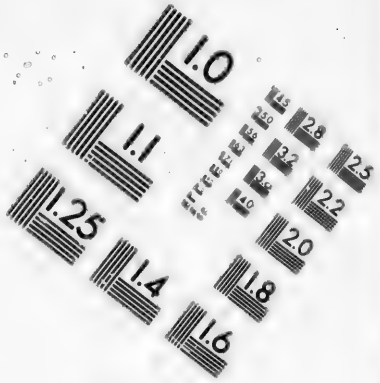
"Noo!" cried Charles, "why noo?—what has happened to make the likelihood less than it was?"

Andrew had alluded, in his own mind, to the termination of all farther hope and expectancy with Lord Sandyford; but not choosing to explain himself, he said carelessly, "Atweel, I dinna ken what for I should think mysel less likely noo than before, of getting twenty thousand

pounds,"—and with this observation the interview ended.

Pierston, however, paid but little regard to the injunction with respect to Mary Cunningham; on the contrary, he took every opportunity of rallying Andrew more and more. And an event had already taken place, that was calculated to verify some of the jocular predictions which he was in the practice of sporting on the subject.





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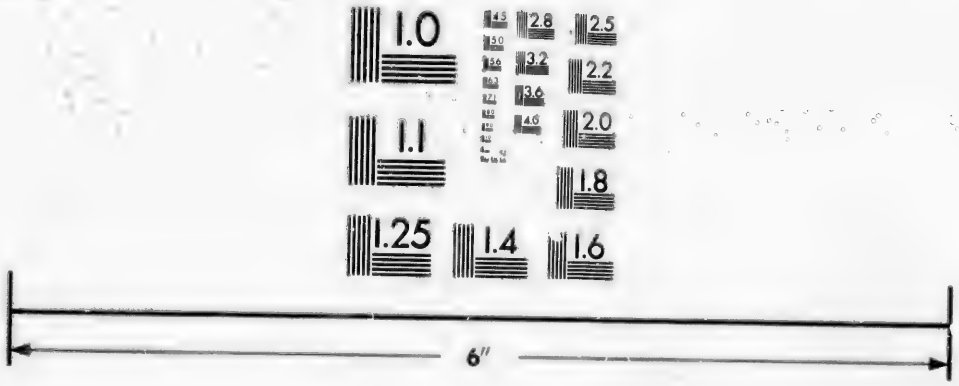

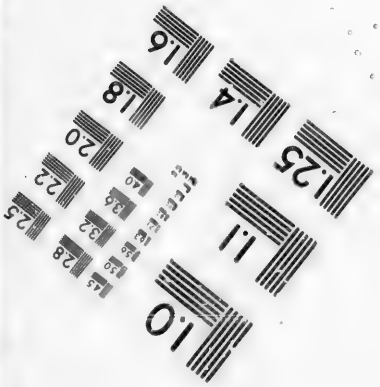

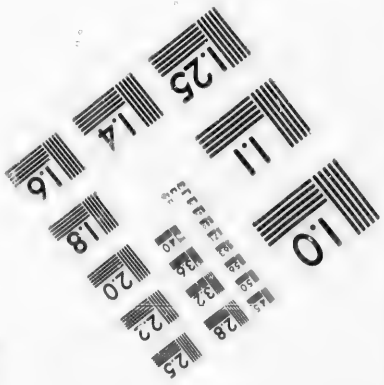

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CHAPTER X.

INSIGHT.

On the Sunday following, after the conversation described in the preceding chapter, Charles Pierston called again on his friend, and, with a look pregnant with merry mischief, said, on entering, "Now, Andrew, ye must promise no to be angry with me, and I'll tell you news. Mary Cunningham's in London. Her brother has been wounded in one of the late battles, and she's come up, with Miss Mizy, to nurse him; for he's not in a condition to be removed to Scotland."

To have judged by the expression of our hero's countenance, it would not have been thought that he received any pleasure from these tidings; for he looked confused, and his colour went and came.

"Poor Willy Cunningham," said he, "was a clever warm-hearted callan. I'm sorry for his hurt, and I hope it's no deadly."

"But Mary is grown most beautiful," said Pierston waggishly. "She dined with her aunt at my uncle's yesterday. Lord, Andrew, man, but ye'll get a prize an ye get her! She inquired very kindly for you; and I promised to let you know where they are in lodgings, for she expects you will call."

"I hae no occasion," said Andrew, with great simplicity.

"Why, you simpleton, have you no regard for your old school-fellow? I have come on purpose this morning to take you with me. Cunningham will be glad to see you; and Miss Mizy herself bade me say, that she has long forgiven the devilry o' the pyet."

"And I hae forgiven her, too," replied Andrew; "for it was out o' that I got the fifty Psalms by heart."

"And out of that you and Mary Cunningham fell in love behind the head-stone, ye know," cried Charles, laughing.

"I'll tell you what it is, Charlie Pierston," said Andrew seriously, "I dinna like this daft nonsense of yours; and I'm sure Miss Cunningham would be vera angry, if she heard you claver in that gait about her. So say no more about it, unless ye want to pick a quarrel wi' me, which I am sure and certain ye hae no intent to do."

"O, very well!" exclaimed Pierston; "if you don't like to hear o't, I'm sure it's no business of mine; but Miss Cunningham is a fine spirited girl, and if you don't make haste, she'll be taken out of your hands."

"This is wicked navers, Charlie," cried Andrew, in a short and shrill peevish accent, as if he had been pricked with needles. "I'm in no condition o' life to even mysel to her, and that should cork your gab. But, howsomever, I'll be glad to go with you to see Willy; and I hope his sister may be out, for she's as thoughtless as yoursel, and ne'er devauls jeering me."

"Then come with me; and if she should be out," said Pierston dryly, "ye'll be able to have more talk with that amiable creature, aunty Mizy."

"De'il's in the fallow, I would as soon meet wi' a pow-head in my porridge at ony time, as wi' the auld red-nebbit runt," said Andrew, somewhat restored to good-humour, as he prepared himself to go out with Charles.

Pierston pretended to remark, that he seemed to take a little more pains than usual with his appearance, and said, "Dear me, Andrew, surely ye never intend to call on such ladies in that old-fashioned style? I thought by this time you would have changed your tailor, and had a more spruce coat for Sunday."

"What's the matter wi' this coat, Charlie?" said our hero pawkily, thinking of the parties where it had been often worn with far more consideration than many of the most fashionable there.—"There's no ae steek broken. Na, na, I allow mysel but ae new coat in the year, and this maun serve for six months yet."

Pierston, who was well aware of the original penury of Andrew's circumstances, and respected the firmness of his character, did not push his raillery farther on his appearance and dress. Had he, however, been acquainted with the actual

amount of his income, he would have despised him as one of the most sordid of mortals.

In their way to Cunningham's lodgings, he informed him that his uncle intended to place him in business on his own account, and hoped that in time he might have it in his power to be of some use to Andrew. There was both pride and kindness in this; but our hero felt only the warmth of the latter sentiment.

In this sort of conversation they reached Sackville-street, where they found the Cunninghams in the second floor of the same house where Mordaunt lodged. Pierston was a little mortified to find them so far aloft, and blamed "the haining heart" of Miss Mizy; alleging that it was unworthy of people of their fortune to be so meanly accommodated. Andrew, without dissenting from this opinion, was pleased with the circumst ıce; because, by his acquaintance with Mordaunt, it gave him an opportunity of being indirectly seen, as it were, by Mary Cunningham, on a vantage ground that he could not otherwise have so easily reached. And with a view to this, while he sent

Charles up stairs before him, he stepped into the drawing-room, where Mordaunt was at the time sitting, engaged on some papers connected with the arrangements for his marriage, which was to take place in the course of the following week.

Mordaunt, whose admiration of our hero's address and discernment was raised to the utmost by the happy effects of his remonstrance with Sir Thomas, received him with the greatest pleasure, saying, "I consider myself, Wylie, so much indebted to you, that I beg you will count me among your friends; and when at any time you can point out in what way it is in my power to serve you, I trust and expect you will claim the fulfilment of this promise."

At such a time, and when Andrew was on the point of visiting Mary Cunningham, this assurance came to him like an inspiring air; and he said, Whenever the time arrived that he might go into business on his own account, he would take the freedom of then applying to him.

Mordaunt on this reiterated his promise, and declared that he should not only have him for a

client, but that he would never lose a proper occasion to speak of his merits and abilities.

Andrew, with this assurance of prosperity in hereafter, left Mordaunt, and with a light foot mounted the stairs to the sitting-room above, where, knocking with his knuckle, he was immediately admitted by Mary Cunningham herself. Charles Pierston was in the room with her, and it was evident, from the excessive interjections of joy with which she received him, that they had been contriving some mirthful salutation. But although, in the first moment of meeting, this was plainly the case, there was in her manner, almost immediately after, a sentiment of unaffected pleasure towards him, of a more moderate, but deeper kind; and she treated him with something very like that cheerful and pure affection which subsists between a brother and a sister. She expressed her satisfaction that he had been so fortunate to obtain the good will of his master, and spoke to him of the love and interest which his grandmother shewed to him, and of her honest pride at every little token of his affection. But

there was something like a feeling of condescension in this kindness, that he liked less than her banter. And though more put out of countenance, he was yet much better pleased, when she reminded him of several little village anecdotes, and described his ludicrous appearance behind the tombstone conning his Psalms.

But this momentary embarrassment was relieved by the entrance of Miss Mizy, who came out of Cunningham's bed-room with an air of prodigious consequentiality, addressing herself with a simper to Pierston, who could with difficulty keep his gravity, while she glanced askance at our hero, as on a creature of an inferior order of beings. Many things had occurred to convert Andrew's dislike of Miss Mizy's superciliousness into contempt; and with a degree of nonchalance that neither Mary nor Pierston could withstand, he said, "Eh dear! Miss Mizy, but ye're looking auld like—I couldna hae thought that in sae short a time there would hae been sic a change."

The elderly gentlewoman did not well know what reply to make to this most irreverent salu-

tation; but at last she said, tartly, "It's no the case wi' thee, Wheelie, for thou's just the same wee blackent like taed as when you left the Stoney-holm."

"Ay, Miss Mizy," said Andrew, "neither you nor me can help our looks. We're baith made by the hand of God, and the art o' man canna mend us."

"Thou was aye a sorrowfu' laddie," cried Miss Mizy, both nettled and diverted by this address, for, with all her acrid humour, she was not insensible to the influence of Andrew's drollery. "And they would need lang spoons that sup wi' the de'il. —Howsomever, I'm glad to see thee looking sae weel, and to hear o' thy weel-doing." And she then proposed that Andrew should adjourn to see his old school-fellow.

Time, which had not improved the charms of Miss Mizy, had wrought a great change on Cunningham. He was grown into a fine manly figure, and his profession had brought out and confirmed the bold and decisive features of his character. His wound, however, confined him to his couch,

and he could only welcome Andrew with a generous shake of the hand,—expressing his admiration at the unchanged simplicity of his appearance.

Mary, who had accompanied our hero into her brother's apartment, still harping on the old theme, reminded them of the pyet-plot, and joked with Andrew on the loss of his first love, Maggy.

Experience of the world, the freedom, it may be the licentiousness of a military life, had given Cunningham a knowledge of womankind above his years, and he looked sharply for a moment at his sister, in such a manner as brought a blush into her cheek that spread over her neck and bosom; nothing, however, farther passed,—for the necessity that Cunningham was under, on account of his wounds, of remaining undisturbed, obliged them to leave the room, and return to that in which Miss Mizy and Pierston were sitting. Andrew did not resume his seat, but nodding a good morning, moved to go away. In turning round, his eye caught several cards on the mantle-piece; and, among others, he observed an invitation,

sticking ostentatiously behind the glass, from his friend the Duchess of Dashingwell; but he said nothing. The moment, however, that he got into the street, he contrived to shake off Pierston, and went immediately to pay his respects to her Grace.

CHAPTER XI.

STRATAGEMS.

ANDREW, from their first meeting, had continued a great favourite with the Duchess; but having, from motives of delicacy towards Lord and Lady Sandyford, abstained from the parties of their friends, her Grace began to wonder what had become of him, and his reception, in consequence, was unusually free and cordial. After the buoyancy and gladdenings of her joyous welcome had subsided, she requested that he would make a point of coming to her ball—the same to which Miss Cunningham and her aunt were invited.

"I'll do that, my Leddy Duchess, with the greatest pleasure," was his answer; "for there's a young lady frae the same country-side wi' me, that I understand is likely to be there."

"And pray who is that?" cried her Grace, looking a little slyly, and not a little surprised at the reason.

"Miss Cunningham," was the reply, and there was a degree of diffidence in the tone in which it was said, that still more excited the curiosity of the Duchess, who immediately exclaimed,—

"On my conscience, Wylie, you are a man of infinite taste, as well as jest. She is very beautiful, and possesses an air of life and fashion uncommon for a country girl."

"She's weel eneugh an she be gude," said Andrew, half blushing; and, with an affected simplicity, seemingly intended to parry the mirthful malice which he saw her Grace was mustering for an assault, but in reality to inveigle her into his interests; for he knew that the open and blithe heartiness of her disposition would, if once engaged on his side, make little scruple in setting him off to the best advantage.

"Why, Wylie," she exclaimed, "how long have you known Miss Cunningham?"

"O, ever since we were bairns."

"Bairns!" cried the Duchess.

"It's a perfect truth," replied Andrew; "her

father was the Laird, and I'm but a cottar's son —so I wouldna hae you fancy, because I should be glad to meet Miss Cunningham at your ball, that I hae ony other motive than the pleasure of seeing an old acquaintance."

"If any other being than yourself," cried the Duchess, "had said so, I might perhaps have half believed him—but I know you too well, Wylie—my cousin Mordaunt has told me what you have done for him, and that Sandyford writes you have more skill in the common law of human nature, than all the twelve judges have of the laws of the land—so no going about the bush with me—I see you are in love with Miss Cunningham —that's the perfect truth."

"Weel, my Leddy Duchess, an I should be sae, I canna help it—the cat may look at the King," replied our hero. "But it's ae thing, your Grace, for a man to admire, and another thing for a woman to admire; and it's no reasonable to expect that ever Miss Cunningham would have any thing more than the kindly condescension of an old friend towards me."

" Now, Wylie," said the Duchess, in a firmer tone, and with a steady countenance, while her eye playfully sparkled, " I have a great mind to be angry. How dare you, in this cunning manner, try to make me your confidant? for you know very well, that a woman once in the secret of a lover, must needs take a part. I see through your drift, friend; you think if you could get the backing of a Duchess it might further your suit."

" Your Grace," cried Andrew, interrupting her, " is cutting far before the point. I never had ony sic thought, my Leddy Duchess; and I think, considering who I am, and what Miss Cunningham is, we have sported in this matter a wee thought ower muckle."

It can scarcely be questioned that her Grace was right in her conjecture, and that Andrew was actuated by a wish to lessen, in the opinion of his mistress, the disparity which he felt so deeply; but that he should have presumed to suppose a lady of the Duchess's rank would ever be brought to take any interest, or to feel any sympathy in his case, at first sight appears highly ridiculous.

He had, however, seen enough of the world to know, that below a certain degree the great make no distinctions of rank; and that the Laird of Craiglands' daughter and the cottar's son, considered from such an elevated pinnacle of nobility as that of her Grace, would seem to stand on no very striking inequality either of rank or condition. Besides, he was fully aware that the familiarity with which he had been always treated by the Duchess, had entirely stifled any sentiment which the humbleness of his birth might, perhaps, in an earlier stage of their intercourse, have occasioned to his disadvantage. But whether we are attributing to him more machiavelism than he really practised, or ascribing to the Duchess more discernment than she possessed, it is certain that the result was in consonance with what we have stated of both; for her Grace found herself irresistibly engaged in his behalf; and from this conversation, after leaving the Duchess, he seemed to be animated with a new spirit, the first manifestation of which was in ordering a new suit of

clothes, with strict injunctions to make them of the very finest cloth, and in the neatest manner possible, and a little more in the fashion than the cut of those he always wore, which were the exact counterpart of the suit he had originally brought from Stoneyholm.

In this new suit, on the night appointed, he made his appearance at the ball. The Duchess, with that sharp eye which the ladies always have to the appearance of the gentlemen, saw, at the first glance, the change in his garb ; and said, that she suspected Miss Cunningham's interest and influence had been already beneficial to his tailor. At that moment Mary was announced, and entered the room, leaning on the arm of her aunt. In approaching towards the Duchess, she was so startled at seeing Andrew at her Grace's side, and on terms of such familiarity, that she became confused, and blushed, and seemed utterly at a loss to express the few simple common-places requisite for the occasion.

The keen-sighted Duchess saw her confusion, and gave Andrew a pinch between the shoulders ;

while, with her wonted urbanity, she said, "My dear Miss Cunningham, I am so rejoiced you are come; for my friend Mr Wylie here has been beseeching me to get him a partner for the next dance, so earnestly, that I was driven to my wit's end. He is such a creature, that unless he obtains one of the very finest women wherever he goes, he will not dance at all."

Miss Mizy, who during this speech had recognized Andrew, stooped forward and pried, as it were, into his face, with such curious amazement, that he could with difficulty keep his gravity, while he said, "Dear me, Miss Mizy, is that you? I thought your dancing days were past."

"I declare," cried Miss Mizy, turning round to her niece, and stretching herself up into the most lofty posture of consequentiality, "it's that whitterat Wylie!"

Mary by this time had a little recovered the emotion of her first surprise; and while she clung, as it were, alarmed, to her aunt, in passing from the Duchess she said, "Wheelie, I'll be as plain as I'm pleasant—mind you're no to expect me to dance with you."

"It's vera weel o' you, Miss Mary," replied Andrew, pawkily, "to tak the first word o' flyting; but ye should first ken whether ye're come up to my mark or no."

Mary bit her lips and blushed. There was a confidence in this retort that made her feel the inferiority of her feminine bravery; and, for the first time, she was affected with an indescribable embarrassment towards Andrew. He, however, continued at her side; and as he was well acquainted with many of the most distinguished guests, Miss Mizy was delighted they had fallen in with him; for, unaccustomed to large and general companies, she was peculiarly susceptible to that disagreeable feeling of insignificance which the unknown multitudes of London uniformly awaken in strangers from the country.

When Andrew had paraded the rooms with them for some time, and enjoyed his ovation, he inquired of Mary if she was really disposed to dance, saying, "I ken vera weel that ye dinna like to hae sic a wee smytch o' a partner as me; but, for auld lang syne, I'll get you a partner."

By this time the lady's pride was a little cowed, and she hesitated in her answer.

"Oh," said Andrew, "ye needna be on any ceremony wi' me; for, in truth, I never dance; so I'll let you aff for the partnership of her Grace's making."

There was something in the manner in which this was said, and in the look which accompanied the words, that brought the crimson into Miss Cunningham's face.

"What are ye saying?" exclaimed Miss Mizy, observing the confusion of her niece.

"Oh, naething," replied Andrew, "but that I'll get Miss Mary another partner, which will leave me free to dance the Scotch measure or the Blackamoor's jig wi' you, Miss Mizy. Eh! what a wonder it will be to a' the company to see you and me louping and flinging like the witches in Alloway Kirk!" And after these words he scudded from them through the crowd, towards a young nobleman with whom he was acquainted, equally remarkable for the beauty of his person, his self-conceit, and shallow understanding, and inquired if he

would dance with Miss Cunningham. Mary's appearance had by this time attracted the attention of all the men; and Lord Dimpleton, delighted with the proposal, immediately went with Andrew, and was introduced to the ladies.

In choosing such a partner, it is not to be doubted that Andrew had consideration for his Lordship's endowments; for in the selection, he paid a compliment to the discernment of his mistress; with whom, according to the estimate he had formed of her judgment and sense, he judged that neither the rank nor the personal appearance of the young Baron would have any prejudicial influence on his own pretensions—pretensions for the first time felt on that evening.

Nothing else particularly occurred during the remainder of the night. The two ladies, on account of Cunningham's illness, retired early; and next day, when Andrew called, Mary was cool and distant towards him; while her aunt, on the contrary, received him with marked attention, expressing her wonder and surprise to have found him such a favourite among so many of the nobility.

But all the pleasure he derived from the altered manners of Miss Mizy was far more than overbalanced by the cold decorum of Mary; for he perceived that it was the result of some secret reflection, and that the change was not favourable to his wishes. In one respect, however, it was not discouraging; for it seemed to imply that she no longer considered the difference in their condition an insurmountable obstacle to the gratification of those wishes which he had now seriously began to entertain.

During the remainder of the time that the Cunninghams stayed in London, Andrew frequently called, but no alteration took place in the studied reserve of Mary; nor did he appear in any instance to presume one step farther than he had been accustomed to take. Towards Miss Mizy, however, his behaviour had evidently entirely altered. He took every opportunity of soothing her humour, and flattering her in all the tenderest and most vulnerable parts of her character, till she was thoroughly persuaded that he was one of the wisest and most discerning of mankind—an opinion

which she peremptorily asserted whenever Mary affected in his absence to ridicule his person or manners; adding to the assertion an emphatic prediction, that she was sure he would be ordained Lord Mayor of London; for he was in a far more likely road to the post than Whittington when greeting wi' his cat in his arms.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FOREST.

For some time after the Cunninghams left London, nothing particular occurred to our hero. He attended his duty as usual at Chambers, and frequently the parties of his fashionable friends. The marriage of Mordaunt took place at the time appointed; and, in addition to a renewal of his promise to give Andrew his business when he commenced on his own account, Sir Thomas Beauchamp himself assured him that he might likewise count him among his friends, and claim his best offices as soon as they could be of any use. But no incident gave him more pleasure than a letter from Lord Sandyford, requesting him to come to Chastington-hall for a few days—an invitation which Mr Vellum cheerfully allowed him to accept.

The object which the Earl had in view in wishing to see him, was with reference to a settlement which he intended to make on the Countess, but which, for some reason that he never explained, he wished to be kept secret even from Vellum.

Andrew was never fond of travelling post; nor was he more satisfied with the perilous velocity of stage-coaches. In his jaunt to Chastington-hall he therefore resolved to take his own way; accordingly, in the afternoon of the first day's journey, as he intended to sleep that night at the seat of Mordaunt, to whose happiness he had so essentially contributed, he left the coach in which he came from London, and walked forward alone; his portmantua being, with many injunctions, entrusted to the care of the guard, to be left at the Sandyford-arms—the public-house at the Park-gate of Chastington-hall.

His road lay through an open forest, along the bottom of a range of hills beautifully covered with verdure; but except where here and there sprinkled with sheep, they were lonely and silent. The fantastic forms of some of the old trees were calculated to awaken romantic fancies; while the pastoral

tranquillity of the hills had a sympathetic influence on the mind, and disposed the passing traveller to something like a sense of awe.

As Andrew was onward plodding his solitary way, he happened, in one of the thickest parts of the wood, to observe a troop of gipsies encamped at the foot of a spacious oak, to a branch of which they had fastened a rope that suspended their kettle. An old and withered hag, in a red cloak, the ancestress, as she seemed, of the whole gang, was seated near the kettle, endeavouring with her mouth to blow into flame a few sticks and splinters which she had placed under it; at her side stood a knavish black-eyed urchin peeling onions; while at some distance a younger female, the mother of the boy, was picking the feathers from a goose that had been missed that morning from the flock of Justice Stocks on Ganderfield-common. A child about twelve months old was standing near the grandmother, in a wattled frame, somewhat like a fowl-basket in shape, but without top or bottom; some ten or a dozen yards farther off lay a stout ill-favoured young man, in ragged regimentals, asleep on the ground, his head resting on the

root of a tree; while an old churl was engaged in unloading a rude cart, from which an ass had been unyoked that a sturdy lad was dragging by a hair tether towards a richer rug of grass and herbage than covered the spot where they had fixed their temporary domicile.

Andrew, who had no great affection for vagrants of any kind, was not at all comfortable when he discovered these, and tried to walk hastily and softly past them; but the boy who was peeling the onions happened to discover him, and was at his side in a moment, most pathetically imploring charity. Our hero affected not to notice him, but hastened on, which quickened the boy's importunity to such a degree that it could be no longer resisted. It happened, however, that Andrew had no smaller change than silver; and in his trepidation, mistaking half-a-crown for a penny-piece, astonished the beggar by his liberality. The gipsy, in a transport of joy, returned shouting to head-quarters, and to the horror of Andrew, who gave a hurried backward glance, the whole gang were assembled round the boy, and looking towards him. "They will think me," said

he to himself, " made of money, and they'll pursue and murder me." The thought lent wings to his heels, and the moment that a turn of the wood concealed him from the view of the gipsies, he ran at full speed till he was out of breath.

By the time he had recovered the immediate effects of his race, the sun had declined to the horizon, and the skies, with that uncertainty of weather which prevails in the fall of the year, were clouded and overcast. No habitation was in sight; and as the road had proved more long and lonely, to say nothing of the gipsies, than was expected, he began to fear he was destined to be overtaken by the night. This was not at all a comfortable apprehension, nor was it cheered by a flash of lightning, slowly followed by deep and muttering thunder that grumbled heavily behind the hills.

" What shall I do if the rain comes on before I get to biggit land ?" said our disconsolate adventurer, eyeing the threatening heavens. The lightning flashed in his face, and the thunder instantly rattled such a peal, that he ran cowering along

as if the vault and rafters of the skies were tumbling about his ears.

This sudden clap was immediately succeeded by large drops of rain.

On the one side Andrew beheld only the darkening hills, bare and dreary; and on the other, the forest, full of fantastic shapes and shadows.

The lightning grew more frequent, and the thunder rolled louder and louder. The whole welkin was filled with blackness, and the gloom of night invested every object long before the natural time. Still, however, the rain held off, except an occasional scattering of broad and heavy drops, which indicated with what a deluge the clouds were loaded.

There was no time for reflection, but only for speed; and as Andrew hastened on, he discovered, by the frequent gleams of the lightning, that the forest was left behind, that the hills receded, and that his road lay across an extensive common. This circumstance did not in itself disturb him; but soon after, he found that he had strayed from the path and was walking on the grass. He tried

to regain the road; but in doubt whether it lay on the right or the left, in the search he went still more and more astray; and the rain beginning to descend in torrents, his heart sunk within him. In this juncture he discovered, by a gleam of lightning, a large tree at some distance; and impelled by the immediate instinct which the rain awakened, he forgot the danger of such a shelter in such a storm, and ran towards it. Scarcely, however, had he taken twenty steps when, in the midst of a fearful flash, the tree was riven into splinters by a thunderbolt.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOSPITALITY.

ANDREW, for some time after the tree had been shivered into splinters, stood like a statue. Drenched to the skin, and astray, he had no alternative, when he recovered from his consternation, but to walk straight forward. He had not, however, advanced many paces till he found his perplexity increased, and his feet bewildered among rushes and sedges, and environed with the perils of a morass. Perhaps his fears augmented the danger, and it was only the effects of the heavy and sudden rain that he mistook for a marsh; but the water deepened when he attempted to advance, and he was glad to retrace his steps.

Completely wet, and almost overwhelmed by despair, he quitted the borders of the morass, and with a sort of instinctive, or rather irrational, precipitancy, he ran from it, till he was again stopped by the noise of a river before him, so loud that he could not but fear it was deep, strong, and rapid, swollen, as it was, into fury by the torrents from the hills.

This was even, he thought, more appalling than the oak shivered by the lightning; and under an immediate pressure of despair in the moment, he sat down upon a stone, which he afterwards described as the head and corner-stone of his sufferings in that night.

He had not been long seated, when he discovered a light at some distance. It was low, dim, and red; but it was to him like the hospitable eye of a friend, and he rose and walked cautiously towards it. In a short time he found himself again in the forest, and still the light was beaming and alluring him forward; and the rain having passed off, he felt, although dripping with wet, more and more confidence as he advanced.

As he walked in a straight line, his path was rugged and uneven, and in many places interrupted with brambles, through which, however, he resolutely forced his way, afraid, if he deviated to the one side or the other, he might lose sight of the light. By this constancy of perseverance, in the course of a short time he reached near enough to see that it was a fire, around which several persons, men, women, and children, were seated; and pressing still on, he at length discovered a stew-kettle hanging from a bough, and recognized his old acquaintances the gipsies.

This recognition did not at first produce any very agreeable emotions; but the horrors of the thunder-storm had somewhat changed his mood. He was cold, and weary, and wet. He was also not altogether free from the pains of hunger. The fire burned brightly; the flames flickeringly climbed the sides of the pot, as if they would have gladly tasted its savoury contents, that fumed in a streamy vapour to the boughs; while the gipsies around were drying their rags at the fire, and smiling cheerfully to one another, their sparkling

eyes and brightening faces giving an assurance of innocent thoughts and free dispositions.

The boy, who had won the half-crown, was the first who discovered Andrew; and coming hastily forward, immediately recognized him. Danger had taught our hero address, and before the boy had time to say any thing, he stepped briskly to the group, and said, "Honest folk, can ye assist a poor wayfaring man that has missed the road, drookit to the skin, and little able to gang farther?"

The gipsies immediately opened their circle, and made room for him by the fire; and after some unknown jabber among themselves, the stripling whom we have mentioned as leading the ass, rose and went to the cart, from which he returned with a bottle, that he offered to Andrew, telling him it was brandy, and to take a suck. The offer did not require the aid of much persuasion; and in drawing his breath, after having swallowed a modicum, our hero thought the gipsies very civilized kind of creatures.

Somewhat invigorated by the brandy, and his clothes beginning to dry, he entered into conver-

sation with them, inquiring how far he was from any place where he could obtain shelter. They told him, that there was a village, about two miles off, within the forest; and the young fellow, in the old regimentals, offered to conduct him thither after supper. In the meantime, the grandmother, who had frequently tasted the soup with a wooden ladle, at length declared it ready; and the kettle was untied from the rope, and placed on the ground—horn spoons were then distributed, and our hero invited to partake. The soup was eaten immediately from the seething-kettle, each of the company blowing to cool it as he carried it to his mouth. In this manner the broth was consumed; and slices of bread being distributed, the goose was torn in pieces, and the parts seized at random. The old man, however, presented Andrew with a leg; and he, in his turn, won the hearts of the women by giving the youngest child a bone to suck from his own mouth. It was this happy facility of adapting himself to the manners of those among whom he happened to be placed, that so wonderfully shaped his fortune. The gipsies, whom he had so greatly dreaded, not

only treated him with kindness, but the fellow, whose appearance seemed almost too uncouth for humanity, was delighted in being afforded an opportunity of repaying the confidence which he seemed to have reposed in them.

When supper was over, the regimentaled gipsy accordingly renewed his offer to conduct our hero to the village; and Andrew, in a glow of thankfulness, augmented by the generous effect of finding so much of the kindliness of human nature among a troop of vagrants, whom he considered as the most depraved of the species, distributed among them a handful of uncounted silver, the first unreckoned money he had ever expended.

After the storm, the moon looked from her window in the cloud, to tell the travellers who had gone into shelter that they might resume their journey, and our hero, with the gipsy, went towards the village.

"You will find but sorry quarters there," said the guide. "The only person who can give you warm ones is the parson, and he won't. The never a one does he fodder; but for that his goslings are thin on the common, and his capons are

at feast before they are fattened. Howsomever, we'll pull his latch, and try his heart. But that you must do; for were I seen within his paling, the hemp is not to spin that would purse my throttle."

As soon as the gipsy shewed the parson's gate, Andrew said to him, "Maybe, young man, I may hae it in my power to do as good a turn as this for you some time, if ye'll let me know when."

And he gave him his card, and wished him good night.

It was now far in the evening; but the candles were still burning bright in the parlour of Dr Saffron, when our hero rang the bell at the gate. A watch-dog, with an audible bay, answered the summons; and soon after, a servant, in homely livery, opened the door, and inquired who was there.

"Tell your master, my lad," was the reply, "that a young man, in great need of a night's lodging, would be obliged to him for a bed."

"Tell the fellow to go about his business!" exclaimed a gruff corpulent voice from within,

whose accents were scarcely more civil than those of the mastiff.

"I have no other business at this time, reverent sir, and ye had as weel let me in; for my claes are damp, and my legs are weary, and it will no be telling you, if ony thing ails me at your door," replied our hero.

"Who are you?—What are you?" cried the Doctor, shewing forth his plump red visage, crowned with a white night-cap, from behind the door, and holding a candle in his hand.

"I am a bewildered Christian," said Andrew, slyly, "that was overtaken by the storm, and glad to ask help of a gang of houseless gipsy vagrants, that treated me with great discretion; your reverence will no surely be more uncircumcised than gipsies?"

"But what are you?" cried the Doctor more earnestly, coming out into full view.

"I'm by profession in the law," replied Andrew, "and was only passing through this part of the country."

"Have you no horse, no carriage?" exclaimed the parson.

"I have nothing of the sort," was the reply. "In truth, sir, ye never had a better opportunity to do a ceevil thing in your life, than to take me in who am a stranger in this land."

"It is a bold request to come to any gentleman's door, and demand quarters in this manner," replied the Doctor; and he was on the point of ordering the footman to come in and shut the door, when our hero, apprehensive of prolonging the conversation in this way a little too much, said, "It's vera true, Doctor, what you say; but it was all owing to a freak of mine. I am going into the west, on a visit to the Earl of Sandyford, and was to have taken my bed to-night with Mr Mordaunt of Beech-Grove, in this neighbourhood. Beguiled by the fine afternoon, I was enticed to walk from the last stage. The storm overtook me, and here I am at your merciful hospitality."

There was something in this that the Doctor liked better than the previous conversation, and he requested him to come in. The appearance of our hero, at all times rather odd than prepossessing, somewhat startled the Rector, who soon,

however, discovered, notwithstanding his homely exterior, that he was accustomed to good society. The conversation having led to a few further explanations, the parlour-bell was rung, and the servant ordered to get a bed prepared for the stranger.

CHAPTER XIV.

EXPLANATIONS.

The reverend Doctor Saffron, into whose hospitable mansion our hero had been received, questioned him in rather a particular manner as to the situation of Lord and Lady Sandyford. Wylie was struck with this circumstance, and it excited his curiosity to ascertain the cause.

"It's no easy to say what's their situation," was his wary reply; "but I'm thinking they are some friends of yours."

"No," said the Doctor, "but I have heard that an unfortunate nephew of mine is deeply implicated in what has happened between them."

"Ay!" exclaimed Andrew, "so ye're uncle to that slippery blade, Ferrers?"

"Yes, I have the sorrow and misfortune. His mother was my only sister, and he is properly my heir; but for some time his conduct has been so extravagant, and his mind so unsettled, that I fear he will constrain me to cancel the obligations of nature and affection."

"Where is he now?" said our hero.

"That I cannot answer," replied the Doctor; "I would give much to know; for this very afternoon I received a letter from one of his friends, the contents of which have greatly distressed me. He has not been seen in London for some time, and no one of his acquaintance there can tell what has become of him."

"That's very distressing, sir; very distressing, indeed!" observed Andrew, thoughtfully; and he then added, "the last account we had o' him was he's being in the neighbourhood of Elderbower with the Countess."

"Possibly he may still be with her—where is she?" inquired the Doctor.

"No," replied Andrew, "her Leddyship is no just left so far to hersel. Ever since the discovery, she has been living a very penitent life in

one of her father's old castles, where ravens and howlets are the only singing birds she can bide to hearken to. Maybe Mr Ferrers has fled the country."

"According to his friend's account, that is not likely to be the case, for his means were entirely drained; he had lost every thing," said the Doctor. "Indeed, the occasion of the inquiry respecting him is of such a nature, that nothing but the most extreme ruin could have given rise to it."

"It's a sore thing to have ill-doing friends. But I trust and hope that he's no under hidings for any thing worse than his cuckooing."

The Doctor looked severely at the levity of this expression; but he added, with emphasis, "There are sins which deeply injure society, more venial than crimes of far less turpitude. Nothing but actual insanity can palliate Ferrers' offence."

"I'm concerned to hear't—what is't?" said Andrew, drawing his chair a little closer to the Doctor, and looking earnest and grieved.

"He abandoned an Italian girl who lived

with him, and left her on the eve of becoming a mother, almost literally without a shilling. Overwhelmed with the sense of her situation and poverty, she rashly followed him to Castle Rooksborough, where she died suddenly in giving birth to her child."

"And what has become of the baby?" said Andrew, compassionately.

"Fortunately, as I have learnt, on sending over this afternoon to my friend, the Rector of Castle-Rooksborough, a lady of rank happened to be passing through the village when the melancholy occurrence took place, and humanely left money, not only to defray the expences of the mother's funeral, but the nursing of the child."

"How long ago?" said Andrew, eagerly.

The Doctor was startled by the quickness of the question, and instead of giving him a direct answer, said, "You seem surprised."

"What did they ca' the lady?" exclaimed our hero, still more impatiently.

"She wished her name concealed; but some suspicion is entertained that it was no other than Lady Sandyford."

At these words Andrew leapt from his seat, and ran dancing round the room, cracking his fingers, and whistling triumphantly. The reverend Doctor threw himself back in his chair, and looked at him with amazement. At last Andrew halted, and going close up to him, said, "Oh! but ye hae told me blithe news—I could wager a plack to a bawbee, that I have been ane of the stupidest creatures that ever the Lord took the trouble to put the breath of life in."

Still the Doctor could only look his astonishment. "Ay," continued Andrew, "ye may weel glower with the een of wonder; for really this is a joy unspeakable, and passing all understanding. I'll set aff for Chastington-hall this blessed night—No; I'll gang first to my Leddy, to make all sure—Weel, who could have thought that Providence was in the storm, to make me an instrument in this discovery."

"Discovery!" echoed the Doctor, mechanically.

"It's better than the longitude—it's the philosopher's stone! Oh, Doctor, Doctor, the genie of Aladdin's lamp could not play peu to you—

What's apple-rubies and plum-pearls to charity and heavenly truth?—But I maun compose myself, for I see ye're terrified, and think I'm going off at the nail."

"I am, indeed, exceedingly surprised at the vehemence of your conduct," said the Doctor, emphatically. "This news, which to me was so fraught with affliction, seems to you pregnant with great pleasure."

"It's an ill wind that blaws naebody good," cried Andrew, still unable to bridle his joy. "But what's pleasure to me, bodes no ill to you. Depend upon't, Doctor, there's as little truth in that foul tale of your nephew and Leddy Sandyford, as in a newspaper clash. The bairn was thought a living evidence of the fact."

"I wish, sir," interrupted the Doctor, "that you would take time to explain what it is you allude to."

Andrew then, with as much method as the flurry of his spirits would allow, related the mystery and suspicion which had attached to the child of the Rose and Crown, declaring his per-

suasion of Lady Sandyford's perfect innocence, and that even "the black story" of her fainting in the arms of Ferrers, would prove, on examination, nothing worse than "the likeness of a ghost caukit on a door."

The mind of the worthy Rector seemed to derive some degree of satisfaction from this assurance; but he still deplored the wickedness of heart, which instigated his nephew to abandon the poor Italian girl in a situation so interesting.

By this time supper was brought in, and Andrew having reflected a little more considerately on the business, agreed to remain where he was that night. Next morning, however, the Doctor's servant was sent to the nearest town for a chaise, and, during his absence, the village was thrown into great consternation, in consequence of a nobleman and his servants having found the body of a man, who had been robbed and murdered by two gipsies in the forest during the night. The story was incoherently told, but the circumstances, wild as they were, made our hero shrink with an involuntary feeling of appre-

hension, for he had no doubt that the robbers belonged to the gang he had met with. When the servant returned, he learnt that the nobleman was Lord Sandyford, and that his Lordship was still at the inn, to attend the coroner's inquest, whither he resolved to proceed immediately.

CHAPTER XV.

THE EXAMINATION.

Although Lord Sandyford had allowed his spirits to sink, after what was considered the full discovery of his Lady's infidelity, still he occasionally rallied; and on hearing of his friend Mordaunt's marriage, summoned resolution enough to pay him a complimentary visit. In passing the forest early in the morning on his return from this visit, the post-boys who drove his Lordship suddenly stopped, and the groom in attendance on horseback, riding up to the window of the carriage, informed him that the body of a man was lying on the road, and that he saw two men, gipsies by their appearance, part from it, and rush into the wood. The Earl immediately ordered the body to be drawn off the high-road and laid on the

grass, and the post-boys to make all the haste they could to the nearest town—the same to which our hero had sent for the post-chaise. On his arrival there, a party was immediately formed to bring the body, and to scour the forest in quest of the murderers, for it was not doubted that the gipsies who were scared from the body had perpetrated the deed.

By the time Doctor Saffron's servant had arrived at the Rectory with the chaise, the body was brought to the inn where the Earl was; and the two gipsies, the father and son, with whom Wylie had been so hospitably treated, were taken prisoners, and likewise carried to the town.

A coroner's inquest, in order to occasion as little delay as possible to the Earl, was immediately held; and both the post-boys and his Lordship's groom swore that the two gipsies were the persons whom they had seen quit the body on the approach of the carriage. Indeed no doubt could be entertained of their guilt; for a gold watch and several other articles, which were known to be the property of the deceased, were found in their possession; the body being immediately recognized to be that

of a Mr Knarl, who resided in the neighbourhood. A verdict of murder was accordingly pronounced against the prisoners, and they were taken to the court-house before Sir Hubert Mowbray, the Lord of the Manor, and a Justice of the Peace.

The gipsies vehemently protested their innocence of the crime; but the young man confessed that he had plundered the body, declaring at the same time that he found it lying dead on the highway.

Sir Hubert was of opinion, and indeed all present concurred with him, that there never was a clearer case of guilt; and he added from his own knowledge, that in passing through the forest with his servant late the preceding evening, he had seen two men by the moonlight, skulking among the trees, and one of them he could almost himself swear was the younger prisoner.

The gipsy admitted that this was true, but said, he was conducting a gentleman who had lost his way in the forest, and in verification of this, presented our hero's card.

Sir Hubert looked at the card, and warmly expressed himself on the barefaced falsehood of

the statement; saying, it was absurd to suppose that any gentleman would, at such an hour, be passing the forest with such a guide; and he added, the probability rather was, that the card had been taken from the person of the unfortunate victim. All the gipsies, young and old, were present at the examination; and the grandmother, during the whole time, preserved a sort of emphatic silence, with her eye steadily and sternly fixed on the Baronet; who, while commenting on the story, carelessly tore the card, and threw it on the floor. The boy who received the half-crown from Andrew watched the old woman intently; and on receiving a signal from her, stooped down and picked up the pieces.

At the close of the examination the father and son were ordered to prison. The rest of the family immediately retired. The father looked fiercely at Sir Hubert when he signed the warrant for their committal; and the young man, with horrible imprecations, exclaimed against the injustice of their doom; but while he was declaiming, the old woman touched her lip with her fore-finger, and he

instantly became silent, and followed his father quietly, but sullenly, to jail.

When Lord Sandyford, who had taken a deep interest in this impressive business, returned from the examination, he sent in quest of the gipsy women and their children, for the purpose of giving them some assistance, and to obtain an explanation of several circumstances which were not, in his opinion, very clearly made out. In fact, the whole proceedings had been conducted in a troubled and unsatisfactory manner. There was a tremour and haste about Sir Hubert, and a horror in the minds of the spectators, which at once awed and interested him. But his messenger was unsuccessful—the women, immediately on quitting the court-house, had left the town. This desertion of their relations did not improve the opinion which his Lordship had formed of their character; and while he was speaking to the landlord on the subject, a post-chaise drove up to the door. The landlord, as in duty bound, left the room to attend the stranger; and the Earl, going forward to the window, was agreeably surprised to see the little sidling figure of our hero alight; nor could he refrain

from smiling when he saw Wylie pay the post-boy ; and the lad, after receiving his optional, apply for an addition ; and even after obtaining another sixpence, still go away grumbling.

Although Andrew had hastened with the express intention of communicating his joyful discovery respecting the mysterious child, a degree of diffidence overcame him when he entered the room, chiefly perhaps occasioned by the altered appearance of the Earl ; the elegant langour of whose expressive countenance was deepened into a pale and settled melancholy. " I am rejoiced to see you," cried his Lordship, with an effort to be gay ; " but I have one injunction to lay on you, that is, never to speak of Lady Sandyford, or allude to her story, beyond what may be requisite to the business for which I wish your assistance."

" But if I bring you glad tidings of her purity, my Lord," cried Andrew.

The Earl interrupted him, by saying, " It is not a matter in which I take now any interest, and I request you to be silent on the subject."

Wylie, as if he had received a blow on the forehead, staggered backward, and seated himself for

some time without speaking. The Earl was evidently affected by his mortification; but without noticing it, immediately began to relate the circumstances attending the discovery of the murder, and the singular story of the younger gipsy respecting the card. This led our hero to recapitulate his own adventures in the forest.

"Then," said the Earl, "the story of the gipsy, as to the manner in which he got the card, is perfectly true."

"As gospel," replied Wylie, emphatically; "and considering he's a gipsy, I'm far wrang if he isna an honest man, gin we make a proper allowance for his tod-like inclination to other folk's cocks and hens; but that's bred in him by nature, out of his neighbouring wi' puddocks and teads, and other beasts of prey, that den about dykes and ditches."

"But," said the Earl, "the proof is so strong against him, that it is impossible to doubt." And his Lordship then stated circumstantially what had taken place at the examination.

"The old woman is a pawkie carlin," said Andrew; "I saw that when I was supping their

goose broth; and I could wager a boddle to a bawbee that the whole clanjamphry of them are awa' to London to spear me out, in order to get me to bear testimony as to the card. But I wonder, my Lord, that ye allowed the Justice to rive the card?"

"It was of no consequence," replied his Lordship, "because he had himself taken down your address."

"I dinna ken," said Andrew, thoughtfully. "Howsever, I'll gang to the Tolbooth and see the gipsy lad, and hear what he has to say for himsel. He's a toozie tyke in the looks, that maun be alloo't; but a rough husk often covers a sweet kernel."

CHAPTER XVI.

PRESUMPTIVE EVIDENCE.

While our hero and the Earl were thus conversing together, Sir Hubert Mowbray was announced. He came to pay his respects to his Lordship, and to express his hope and wish that he would attend the trial of the gipsies.

"I will undoubtedly be present," said the Earl, "but unless it is absolutely necessary for the ends of justice, I would decline being a witness."

Sir Hubert assured him that every due consideration would be paid to his Lordship's feelings with respect to that point, and took his leave.

"I think," said the Earl, "he does not appear to be pleased at the reservation I have expressed; but really it is so shocking a thing to be in any way concerned in offering up the sacrifices

which the law so sternly requires, that a man may well be excused for being reluctant to bear witness in the case of a capital offence."

"He's certainly no content with something," said Wylie, thoughtfully; "and I am sorry to see that he would fain hae the gipsy hanged. But he's no the first man I hae heard of that has a yearning for blood, and would hunt their fellow-creatures down even to the death, wi' an appetite in their minds as fell as the hunger of a rabiator. But, my Lord, the gipsy, for the ends of justice, must be protected; and I'll go and see him immediately anent the same."

Lord Sandyford was pleased with this alacrity. He had never given Andrew much credit for generosity, but the warmth of gratitude which he had manifested in his own case, with respect to the Countess, and the interest which he now seemed to take in the fate of the friendless vagrants, convinced him that his merits did not entirely consist in his humour, nor in that intuitive perception of the manageable points of character, by which he had been so often surprised and diverted.

By the time our hero returned from the prison, the Earl had ordered his carriage to be in readiness to convey them to Chastington-hall. But Wylie seemed in doubt and perplexity, when he came back.

"The gipsy," said he, "is as innocent of the blood as the babe unborn. I could stake my right hand upon that—but for rifling the body, I hae little to say for him. I think, however, that it cannot be highway robbery; nor, indeed, any thing beyond the lifting of a waif, provided it can be shewn that he was willing, upon certification of proof, to make restoration to the heir. Now the heir, in this case, has as yet made no demand."

"As to that, whether it be law or not, I cannot presume to determine; but I must say it looks very like common sense," replied the Earl; "and with respect to the murder, if you can clear him of that, I should think the robbery will not place him in any very perilous jeopardy. It will, I fear, however, Wylie, be a difficult task to prove, to the satisfaction of any judge or jury, that two gipsies seen near a murdered man, and

afterwards found with property in their possession known to have been about the person of the deceased, were not guilty of the murder."

"I own it, my Lord; but when I hae the right end of the string, I never despair. A deed has been done—somebody did it—but that somebody is no the poor ne'er-do-weel gipsies—or guilt has more guises than hypocrisy can put on."

"I certainly," observed the Earl, "would rely, in any case, Wylie, where management was requisite, on your sagacity; but facts are stubborn things, and a gipsy is from his birth mulcted of more than half the rights of any other man."

"That's no to be disputed, my Lord; a gipsey's character, a hachel's slovenliness, and a waster's want, are three things as far beyond a' remedy, as a blackamoor's face, a club foot, or a short temper. But, as your Lordship weel observes, facts are stubborn things; they are stepping-stones in the mire, and it is by them that I hope the do-na-gude may get over his present danger; at least, I'll try to lend him a helping hand. But no to trust altogether to the weakness

of my own judgment, I'll hasten to London for the advice of some more experienced head."

"Then you will not go with me to Chastington?" said the Earl.

"Your Lordship maunna expect it in an instance of life and death like this; but gin ye please, I'll take a nook in the carriage wi' you as far as the road lies in my way. It's however on a bargain that your Lordship winna try to sift any more of my opinion in this business."

"Agreed!" cried the Earl; "and I presume, as you were on your way when you halted here, you will have no objection to set off with me immediately."

"Hooly, hooly, my Lord," exclaimed Wylie, resuming his wonted familiarity; "there maun be twa words about that. In the first place, I'm neither a swallow nor a camelion, to feed on the air of the lift; and in the second, a journey requires provender."

While the waiter was laying the cloth for some refreshment, Andrew went down to the stable-yard of the inn, and sauntering for a few minutes,

apparently without an object, asked a post-boy which of his comrades had been with Lord Sandyford, and the lad having pointed them out, he went towards them, and said, "Heh, sirs! but it was a terrible job ye had o't wi' my Lord. I wonder, for my part, that ye hae got so soon the better o't, that ye can already whistle sae lightheartedly. How, in the name o' gude, did ye no notice the man? if ye hadna driven like deevils o'er him, maybe he might hae recovered."

The post-boys stared at an imputation which had never entered any other head, and one of them declared that the man must have been dead several hours. The other also as stoutly asserted, that the body was stiff and cold; indeed, so much so, that it was like a log when he assisted to drag it from the road upon the grass. Wylie made no remark on this circumstance, but treasured it up in his own mind. It was certainly not at all probable, that if the gipsies had killed and robbed the man at the same time, they would have returned to the body; and the declaration of the son, that he had found it lying dead on the road, when disturbed in plundering it by the ap-

proach of Lord Sandyford's carriage, derived some confirmation from this testimony. Our hero himself could bear witness for the gipsy, from the time he had joined the rest of the band at supper; and Doctor Saffron and his servants would be satisfactory evidence of the hour of his arrival at the gate of the parsonage.

"About what time," said Andrew to the post-boys, "was the deceased last seen alive?"

Nobody in the stable yard could give any satisfactory answer; but Sir Hubert Mowbray's groom happening to come in, on hearing the question, stated, that he and his master had passed him on the road about ten o'clock, and not far from the spot where the murder had been committed.

Andrew recollected that ten was struck on the church clock, as he was standing at the parsonage-gate—and the gipsy had only then just left him, and could not be seven miles distant, for so far off the murder had been committed, till at least an hour after. But he only observed to the groom, that he and his master had not passed long before the murder was committed, as it ap-

peared the deceased could not have walked far from the spot where they had seen him. This remark startled the fellow, and our hero saw his confusion; but, taking no notice of it, changed the current of his inquiries to some general reflections on the atrocity of the crime, and the strong circumstances that bore against the gipsies. In the course, however, of a few minutes, he said to the groom, "I wonder that you and your master were not afraid to be wandering through the forest at that time o'night, like two babes in the wood."

"Bless your heart," replied the groom, "we never fears no nothing there at all, besides being as you sees on horseback—Why, soon after we passed that there poor soul who has been killed, master sent me off to order a po-shay here for him in the morning, to take him over to Sir Thomas Fowler's fox-chace, and rode home himself."

"Yes," said one of the post-boys, "we lost a good something by the job, for Sir Hubert in the morning could not have the chaise, till so be it that these murderers were done for, and now he won't go at all, till the 'sizes are over."

"To be sure," said our hero, "it wouldna be

a decent thing of him, as a magistrate, to be jaunting and gallanting about the country, when such a judgment has happened at his own door. I dare say, poor gentleman, it gives him great concern."

"You may say that," replied the groom, "for he has done nothing all day but fidget about, ordering and counter-ordering—and I don't wonder at it, for the dead man owed him a power of money for rent—and I suppose, now he's gone, that master won't touch a farding."

Some difference arose among the post-boys and menials, as to the law of this opinion. In their discussion Andrew took no part, but walked away thoughtfully, as if he intended to return into the house, when suddenly he turned round, and cried to the groom, "Hey, Thomas Fowler, I want to speak to you," beckoning to him at the same time. "From what you say, Thomas, of the poor man that was killed, I fear his family will be very ill off. Thomas—your name's Thomas Fowler, I think you said?"

"Lord bless you!" said the man; "my name's Robert Jenkins—it's master's friend they call Sir

Thomas Fowler—and as for Mr Knarl, who has been killed, he had never no family at all, being you sees a single man."

"But I suppose he has died much and justly lamented by all who knew him," said Andrew.

"As for that," replied Robert Jenkins, "I cannot for a surety take it on me to say; but I knows he was a damned hard-mouthed chap, and never could give no civil answer at all."

"Then, after all, Robert Jenkins, I'm thinking there hae been greater losses at the Shirra Muir than his death," said our hero, and abruptly returned into the house; and, despatching his repast, entered the carriage with Lord Sandyford, and was hastily driven off.

CHAPTER XVII.

SAGACITY.

Wylie, from his arrival in London, had continued to lodge with Mrs Callender, till Mr Vellum took possession of Sandyford-house, when the Solicitor, apprehensive that the Earl might change his mind, not choosing to dispose of his own residence, gave it in custody to Jacob, an elderly married man, who acted as his porter and special messenger. With him Andrew was allowed the use of a bed and parlour; and the address on the card given to the gipsy was, in consequence of this arrangement, from the house in Queen's Square.

It was late in the evening, when, after parting from Lord Sandyford, he reached London; and,

on entering Queen's Square, he found a mob assembled round the house, and the gipsy-woman, as he suspected, already there; and on advancing towards them, he found they had been ordered into custody by Jacob, for besieging the door.

The gipsies soon recognized him, and clamorously, and in tears, claimed his promised protection. He had no difficulty in divining the motive of their pertinacious visit, and interfering in their behalf with the officers, as he was well known in the neighbourhood, readily obtained their deliverance. He then requested the constables to advise the crowd to disperse, while he directed Jacob to receive the vagrants into the kitchen, and get them something to eat.

While the gipsies were descending into the area, their benefactor was admitted by the hall-door; and, on entering the parlour, he said to Jacob, "I dare say that auld gipsy-wife is a daub baith at cauk and keel. What think ye?"

"I don't doubt it, sir," replied Jacob, who was not altogether an infidel in gipsy prophecy.

"Ah," cried Andrew, "I suppose ye hae been getting your fortune spae't."

Jacob firmly denied the fact. "Indeed," said he, "the gipsies were very sullen, and have been sleeping on the steps all the afternoon; and when we ordered them away, they said, you would not have done so; and complained bitterly of having travelled a great way to see you, and shewed us one of your cards all patched."

"Did they say nothing of the end's errand they had come upon?"

"No," replied Jacob; "but they were much cast down to hear, that it was uncertain when you would be back; and so, as they would not go away from the door, I ordered them into custody."

"That was very prudent in you, Jacob; and as I would like to ken what they want wi' me, just slip down and bring up the auld woman; and hear ye, Jacob, tak tent that ye leave no spoons, nor sma' things lying loose about; for the gipsies hae tarry fingers, and ye would need an ee in your neck to watch them."

As soon as the old woman was ushered into the parlour, our hero said to her, "Ye haena been blate nor late, honest woman, in paying me a visit. What's happened to you, and whar's your gudeman, and your son?"

The gipsy faithfully reported the whole proceedings, with which our hero was already acquainted; and the unvarnished accuracy of her narration made him respect her veracity. Towards the conclusion of her story she became animated and agitated, especially when she described the scene which took place at the examination; asserting, with great vehemence, that Sir Hubert Mowbray himself was the murderer.

"Base scoot!" exclaimed Andrew, affecting more indignation than he felt, "what puts such a thought into your head?"

The old woman made no reply, but looked steadily in his face for some time; and then added, "What I say is true; and you believe me."

"Wheesht, wheesht, ye auld runt; you ought to be flung into a mill-dam, and left to sink as a Christian, or swim as a witch. But what reason hae ye for this notion?"

"Why was he so greedy," cried the accuser, "of every thing against my son? The hope of safety flushed on his cheeks, and glistened in his eyes, whenever any thing came up against him. Why did he tear your card? I saw deceit in his visage when he did it. I doubt if he has written down the true name; for I watched the motion of his fingers in the act, and they ran not in the way the letters on the card do. His hand was shaking at the time, albeit he is a man of a stout heart."

This suggestion with respect to the card made the blood run cold in our hero's veins; and, as he eyed the old woman with a wary and eager look, he said, "Ye're no canny, gudewife—ye're no canny. But gang awa back to your ain country side; and when the trial comes on, I'll be there."

The sybil made no reply to this; but, with a token of respect, moved to leave the room. On reaching the door, however, as she took hold of the handle, she turned round, and said solemnly, "I can see the light through the horn, and the bird in the shell."

"Cast nane o' your cantrips here, lucky, but do as I bid you," said our hero, seriously alarmed. In the same moment he rung the bell, she opened the door; and smiling with an expression that might be described as full of a mysterious and benignant superiority, again curtsied and withdrew.

Jacob, guessing the occasion of his summons, conducted the gipsy down to the kitchen, in the first place, and then returned to his master.

"Jacob," said our hero to him, as he entered the room, "I redd you tak tent o' that carlin, and use her and the bairns discreetly, for I trow she has mair insight than honest folks; and I warn you to cross her loof wi' siller. There's five shillings to you, to help you to get well rid o' her out o' the house."

Jacob was not a little impressed with this speech; and was beginning to relate many well authenticated stories of gipsy witcherie, when he was cut short by Wylie, who, already sufficiently eirie, said, "Ye need say nae mair about them; for their power and discernment is no to

be disputed. They're capable to mak the like o' you, Jacob, believe that spade-shafts will bear plums; so look to yoursel, Jacob, or wha kens what may befall you?"

Jacob's countenance underwent several changes during this speech, and still more when Andrew continued, "And noo, Jacob, when I think o't, we maun gie something to the young woman and the bairns, that we may get a waff o' their good will likewise. Ye'll gie the mither this half-crown, and a shilling a-piece to the wee anes; and if your wife can lay her hands on a claught o' ony thing eatable for the family to tak wi' them, for God's sake, tell her no to be scant or scrimpit; for Heaven only knows what will be the o'ercome o' this visitation."

By this time Jacob was standing pale and wan, and our hero saw that it was quite unnecessary to put him more upon his guard, either with respect to the wiles of the gipsies in the house, or impress him with the necessity of getting well quit of them. Indeed, when Jacob went down stairs, nothing was too good for the gipsies, who soon

after departed highly satisfied; bestowing their kindest benedictions in a manner, as Jacob said, that could scarcely have been expected almost from a Christian.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A FRIENDLESS BARRISTER.

When the old woman had retired, our hero went immediately to Sandyford-house to consult Mr Vellum, who expressed great surprise at seeing him so soon back. He was, however, too much a man of the world to make any inquiries; but when Andrew mentioned that he had fallen in with the Earl on the road, and, in consequence of some things connected with that meeting, he had been induced to return to town, he was not altogether satisfied in his own mind, and thought his Lordship shewed something like a prejudicial partiality, in confiding so much in a person so far below himself in the consideration of the world; nor was this apprehensive feeling allayed, when Andrew said, "Noo, Mr Vellum, I want your

assistance in a great cause that I have taken in hand, for a person, to whom, in a time of straits, I was indebted for no small civility. Lord Sandyford, as well as myself, is concerned in the occasion. It's no in the eye of the world a thing by common, nor, in truth, what ye would be fashed with; but I'm bound in gratitude and humanity, Mr Vellum, to see the parties righted. Two decent men in their way, a father and a son, Mr Vellum, are accused of having committed a trespass; but there is some reason to jealouse the true trespasser is a person of great power and consideration, and who, to save his own carcase, wouldna scruple to sacrifice my two frien's. What I therefore want, and nobody knows better whom to recommend than yoursel, is some sharp and fearless young lad, that has his bread to bake at the bar, that I may employ him, at my own cost, Mr Vellum, to assist the twa poor men out o' their difficulties; for really the circumstances look hard against them. In truth, it's a knotty case, and will require patience of thought, as well as bravery o' mind, sic as nae first-rater can afford to give, and deal justly with other clients; and yet it's

just a case that a first-rater is alone capable of handling to a proper issue. On that account, I want talents of the first quality, and leisure to allow them to be thoroughly applied."

Why our hero should have thrown such a haze of mysticism over the business, must be left for the consideration of those who can penetrate into the depths of his peculiar character. It had the effect, however, of leading the Solicitor to suspect that this said great cause was connected with the imputed infidelities of the Countess, in which, from the previous declaration of the Earl, he supposed his Lordship was averse, at least for the present, to appear personally.

Accordingly, under this impression, and believing that in due time the management of the ultimate proceedings would devolve into his own hands, he mentioned several young men then coming forward at the bar, with the promise of ability. But Wylie objected to them all, as being more ambitious to make a figure themselves, than to set forward the causes of their clients to the best advantage. At last he hit upon one that he thought would answer.

"Do the circumstances require any aid from eloquence?" said Vellum.

"No," replied our hero; "but we'll want a paper of great pith drawn up for the defence."

"Then," replied Vellum, "I recommend you to secure Blondell. He is a young man of very singular accomplishments; and owing to an impediment in his speech, he can never become eminent as a pleader; but he is an impressive writer, and is besides possessed of a curiously constituted mind, and a strong natural power of observation."

"He has been made on purpose for my turn," replied our hero, "if he answers your description; so I beg ye'll gie me two or three lines to him, that I may confer with him mysel in private; for there are some points in the business that canna very well be set forth in a brief. Over and above all, although my Lord Sandyford's a principal witness, his Lordship would fain decline appearing; and ye ken we maun suit oursels to his humour, to the best of our ability."

Vellum immediately wrote a note to Blondell, introducing Wylie to him, and requesting his particular attention to the object and purpose of

his visit. With this note, our hero proceeded directly to Clement's Inn, where the obscure chambers of this neglected son of genius were situated.

Blondell was at home, and the moment that he had read the introductory note, Andrew said in his abrupt manner, "Ye see, sir, that I have a notion to become acquaintit with you; and ye're a man, or I'm wrang informed, of ower mickle discernment, no to be sensible that I must hae some particular reason for taking such an extraordinary freedom, especially when I tell you that the business, wherein I stand in need of your help, is no ane that ony regular brief can be made up on. In a word, Mr Blondell, I want you to go into the country with me, in order to assist in the defence of two friendless gipsies, who stand accused of murder. I believe them innocent, and I think I can guess who the true murderer is; but as I would do nothing on suspicion, I mean to confine oursels to the defence of my clients. For this business ye can hae nae fee in the usual way; but I'll bear all your expences, and make you a reasonable compensation for the loss o' time; and if we succeed, as I doubt not we shall, I hae

some hope ye'll make such friends by the business, as will put their shoulders to your wheels th ough-out the rest o' your life."

The plainness of this address produced the desired effect. Blondell said he would accept the proposal at once.

"In truth, Mr Wylie," said he, with a feeling which added considerably to his natural difficulty in expressing himself, "I have not at this time much to do, and I am obliged, you see, to betake myself to other studies than those of my profession."

Our hero looked at his table, and saw on it several volumes consisting of novels, travels, and poetry.

"These," said Blondell, "are my pot-boilers. I am obliged to do all manner of literary labour, under all possible varieties of name."

"It's weel for you, Mr Blondell, that you can do so; but ye maun gi e up meddling with sic clishmaclavers as novels and ballads, and lend your whole power and pith to me. I dinna, however, wish you to work cosnent wark, that is, without meat or wage; so I beg ye'll come and

tak your dinner in a private secrecy wi' me, at Mr Vellum's house, in Queen's Square; and by that time I'll be provided wi' a bit of Abraham Newland's paper, to help to keep the banes green till we see what's to be done with the two ne'er-do-weels that I hae ta'en by the hand."

Blondell was much amused by the originality of our hero's manner, and readily accepted the invitation.

CHAPTER XIX.

DOUBTS.

"JACOB," said our hero, when the old man admitted him on his return from the interview with Blondell, "there's a great man to dine wi' me the morn, so ye'll see and hae every thing in the best order, and tell your wife to gie us a spice of her skill in cookery, and see that ye can behave yoursel on the occasion. For he's somewhat o' an odd way, and may come no just, as by rights he ought to do, in his own carriage, but in ane of the blackguard hacknies, or aiblins on his feet. They call him Mr Blondell; and when once he has come, mind I'm no at home to ony living creature, no, not even to my Lord Sandyford, an he were to come to town, nor to ane lower than the

King himself, whom you know we are all bound to serve and obey to within an inch of our lives. So I hope you will take heed to what I am telling you."

Jacob was not altogether without need of an exhortation of this kind; for Andrew had observed that he was a great respecter of persons, and anticipated that the simple air and plain attire of Blondell, were not calculated to gain much of his reverence

At the hour appointed the Barrister came, and was received with the utmost deference and consideration; but, as Wylie expected, he arrived on foot, under the protection of only an umbrella, although the weather was drizzling. Jacob's wife, on her part, was none deficient, and when dinner was over, the door of the dining-room was closed, and admission to all and every sort of visitors strictly prohibited.

Our hero then entered into a circumstantial relation of the whole case; he described, first, his own adventures with the gipsies, then the circumstances under which the body was found; and lastly, the examination, as it had been reported

by Lord Sandyford. In this he neither extenuated nor exaggerated, but related the details as accurately as he could recollect. He, however, kept carefully out of view his own reflections on the business; his discoveries in the stable-yard; and his interview with the gipsy woman, and her suspicions, saying, "Noo, Mr Blondell, what I have been telling you is the case, as it will come on before the Court; what's your aff-hand opinion o't, for all that I hae said will be proven by evidence?"

"Whether the gipsies are guilty or not guilty," replied Blondell, "they will be condemned. No jury can resist facts so strong, nor presumptions so striking. But you said, that in your mind you believed the gipsies innocent, and that you thought you knew who the real murderer is. Let me know upon what this opinion is founded?"

Wylie looked earnestly at Blondell, and after a pause of about a minute, said, "There are some things that shoot up in our fancies, that we would need to guard even frae the ear of friendship; for, unless they prove true, the disclosure will make

fools of us, and gin they are true, we dare scarcely own them—they so far surpass the guesses of human wisdom." He then described the manner of Sir Hubert Mowbray during the interview with the Earl. "He was a man," said he, "fey wi' something on his mind. There was a sort of inward fury about his thoughts, his eyes were gleg and suspicious, and full of fear, and his words were quick, and of an uneven and unnatural sound."

"Your observations are shrewd and impressive, but there is nothing in them that can be available on the trial. They might help to swell the interest of a winter's tale, but cannot be urged in Court; nor are they susceptible of being brought out in evidence," said Blondell.

Our hero then resumed, and related with minute accuracy what afterwards passed in the stable-yard. The moment that he adverted to the dispatching of Jenkins the groom for a post-chaise, Blondell clapped his hands eagerly, and exclaimed, "The gipsies may be saved, but we must still have something stronger against Sir

Hubert, before we can venture to reckon on their acquittal. We must throw suspicion upon him."

Wylie then mentioned his own conversation with the gipsy woman, and her suspicion that the magistrate had not written down the address that was on the card.

"There will be no other witnesses summoned," said Blondell, "but those who were examined at the coroner's inquest; and as Jenkins the groom was not there, I should not be surprised if he were sent out of the way."

At this juncture, the bell of the street-door was impatiently rung, and soon after the gipsey boy was heard clamorous in the hall. Wylie expressed his astonishment at the circumstance, and going to the room door, desired the boy to come in, and tell him what had happened.

The poor creature was jaded and heated, and so entirely covered with mud, that he looked more like a statue of clay than a human being. Jacob was ordered to retire; and the boy then related that, as he was returning with his mother and grandmother to the town where his father and grandfather were imprisoned, they

had passed a stage-coach, on the top of which was Jenkins, the magistrate's groom, and that his grandmother ordered him to dog him at all hazards.

"I, thereupon," said the boy, "ran in and below the coach, and hugging the perch, came with it to London, and the man is now at the inn where it put up."

"Ye're a clever callant, and it's a pity ye're a gipsy," said our hero; "but go down to the kitchen, and get something to eat, and there's a half-a-crown to help you to a lodging; look sharp, however, after Jenkins, and dinna let him think he's watched.—The hand of Heaven," said our hero piously, when the gipsy had left the room in charge of Jacob, who was summoned to conduct him down stairs, "is visibly stretched forth in this bloody work. Jenkins must be subpoened on our side;" which was done the following morning, not a little to his surprise, and the consternation of his master.

Blondell having acquired, in conversation with our hero at different times, the sort of information which we have described, accompanied him, a few

days prior to the assizes, to the town where the gipsies were imprisoned, and where they found the doom of the poor outcast creatures considered as sealed. Numberless stories of their atrocities reconciled the humanity of the inhabitants to the ignominious destiny that awaited them.

It was of consequence to the success of the defence, that the character of Sir Hubert Mowbray, and of the state of intercourse which had existed between him and the deceased, should be thoroughly ascertained. With respect to the former, there was no difficulty; the character of Sir Hubert stood high among his neighbours; he inherited from his father an ample patrimony, which he had materially improved. The whole country, indeed, applauded his general conduct; but there were a few invidious persons who qualified their praises with some insinuations against his implacable spirit, alleging that he was even as persevering in his resentments as he was zealous in his friendships; and that if he had not been so prosperous, he might have proved a bitter and malicious character. "He is a man," said Blondell one evening to Andrew, as they were comparing notes together in the inn

where they had taken up their abode, "whose success seems to deter people from speaking out what they think of him."

The inquiries respecting his intercourse with the murdered man were not, however, so easily answered. Their condition in life had been so very different, and the issue of their respective fortunes had also been so dissimilar, that nothing of the nature of an intimacy existed between them. In the outset of life, the deceased had been in a better sphere; and when a young man, was admitted into the best societies in the country; but falling into irregular habits, he had gradually lost caste. Towards him it was said that Sir Hubert had acted very generously; never particularly pressing him for the payment of his rent, which was generally in arrears.

Blondell, on receiving this account, began to waver in his suspicions. He still thought that the gipsies were not guilty of the murder; but he could not bring himself to believe that a gentleman of Sir Hubert Mowbray's character, so friendly to the deceased as he was represented to have been, was likely to be hastily betrayed into the

commission of so foul a deed; for it seemed to him that if he had committed the murder, it must have been on premeditation, from the circumstance of sending his groom to order the post-chaise, after he had confessedly passed Mr Knarl in the forest.

"Had the groom," said Blondell, "been previously despatched, it might, as it is reported that Knarl was a hard-mouthed fellow, have been reasonable to suppose that they had quarrelled perhaps about his arrears, and that in the quarrel a hasty and fatal blow was inflicted. But according to the facts, and in unison with our information, it does not appear to me that Sir Hubert could have had any motive for the perpetration of the crime; I am therefore disposed to think that it must have been committed by another—some unknown individual."

Andrew could not reply to these observations; but he still adhered to his own opinion, that the Baronet, and he alone, was the guilty. At the same time, he was convinced that unless the blood could be very clearly brought home to some other than the unfortunate gipsies, the probability was, from the prejudices entertained against them, that they

would be inevitably cast. He therefore remained some time silent and thoughtful after Blondell had paused; and when the other said to him, "What is your opinion now?" he replied, "It's no easy to say what I think; but although it's an old story since Sir Hubert and the deceased were on any footing of equality, there might hae been matter for a grudge between them then; the which, from the constancy of the Baronet's nature, may have been treasured up for a day of reckoning. I have heard of Highlander gentlemen nursing revenge from generation to generation, and visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children; and I jealouse that what's done in the North may be likewise done in the South, especially when I hear of folk possessed wi' a Highland dureness of temper. I wouldna marvel, Mr Blondell, that some taunt at the races in their youth, or the whisking away of a partner at a ball, had become motive enough in the breast of a man with Sir Hubert's pride and perseverance, to grow to the foul head of this murder."

Blondell was struck with the remark; and after remaining some time reflecting with himself, said, "What you observe is certainly not improbable;

and, perhaps, instead of troubling ourselves any more about the intercourse of latter years, we should try to ascertain what sort of intimacy existed between them in their youth."

But the assizes were to commence in two days, and there seemed to be no means before the trial left to obtain access to the sources of this information. Our hero, however, suggested an expedient that surprised Blondell even more than the ingenuity he had hitherto shewn—It was no less than to employ the old gipsy woman in the inquiry.

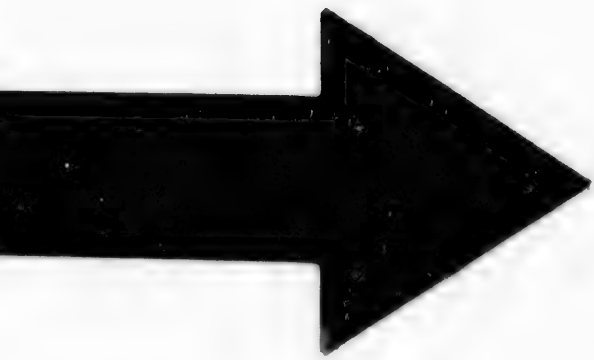
CHAPTER XX.

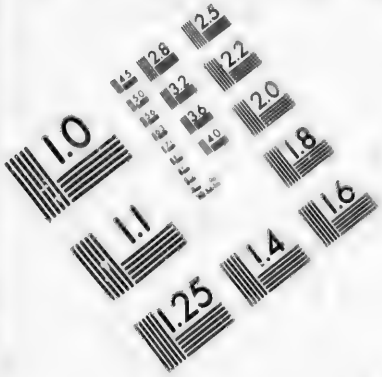
CONSULTATIONS.

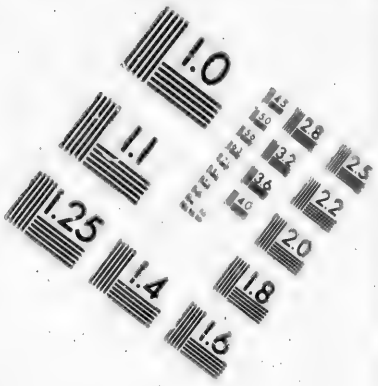
For some days prior to the arrival of our hero and Blondell, the poor gipsy women and the children had been seen trotting about the skirts of the town. At first they pitched their tent under the hedge on the road leading to the mansion of Sir Hubert Mowbray; but he ordered his servants to drive them away. Being thus forced to change the place of their encampment, they removed to a lane behind the inn, where the servants about the stables, in compassion for their misfortune, sometimes condoled with them on the fate of their relations. As often, however, as this was done, the children began to weep bitterly, and their mother sat dejected and silent; while

the old woman, dilating as with the energy of the inspired Pythia, astonished her auditors with her fierce and oracular predictions. In the midst of one of these rapturous paroxysms, Sir Hubert sent them some money, and requested them to retire from the neighbourhood, until the trial was over. In an instant, as if actuated by one spirit, the whole group started up, and with loud and vehement imprecations against the injustice of man, demanded the interposition of heaven. Nothing, however, escaped them to betray in the slightest degree their suspicion of Sir Hubert, except a rash and indignant repulse, by the boy, of the servant's hand who offered them the money. The old woman, observing the action, became at once calm, and making a sign to the others, silenced them also, while she took the money, saying significantly, "It is sent by Providence to enable us to get help to prove who is indeed the true murderer."

The whole of this scene produced a profound sensation among the bystanders, and some of them began to doubt if the gipsies were guilty;







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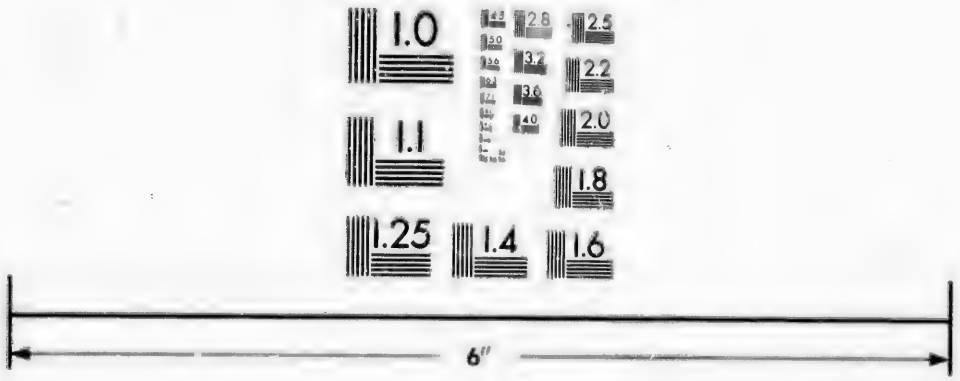

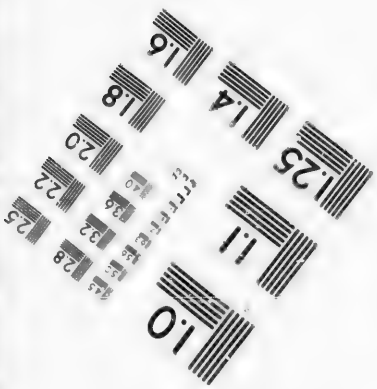

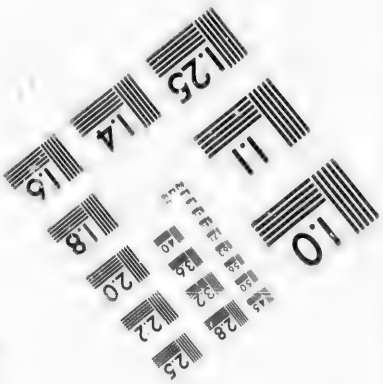

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while all regarded the forlorn family with sentiments of compassion and charity. A small collection was in consequence raised for them on the spot; and the benevolent feeling in which it originated spreading through the town, a considerable sum was soon raised.

It being known among the servants of the inn that Blondell was a barrister; soon after his arrival, the old woman had come with the money in her hand to solicit his assistance. Blondell at first refused the money; but our hero signified to him that he ought, in the mean time, to accept it.

"It is necessary," said he, "that we should not appear overly voluntary in this affair, till we get a better grip o' the case, and ye must just submit to be thought lightly of for a season."

The effect of taking the money was what Andrew anticipated; and the meanness of Blondell was everywhere loudly condemned. Some of his brethren of the long robe, on reaching the town that evening, when they heard of the transaction, made a great stir about the respectability of the

profession, and treated Blondell with unequivocal marks of their contempt, all of which he endured with invulnerable fortitude. Thus, not only were the prisoners already sentenced in public opinion, but their counsel contemned as obscure and incapable, and, both in principles and practice, a disgrace to the bar. It required no little resolution on his part to bear this with patience; and more than once he expressed his apprehensions to Wylie, that the prejudice against them would be fatal to their clients. Andrew, however, was none dismayed. He had embarked in the business, and with that undeviating perseverance which no casualty seemed to affect, he resolutely went forward.

In pursuance of the plan which our hero had suggested, as we noticed at the conclusion of the last chapter, the old gipsy was sent for, and when she entered the room, he said, "Noo, lucky, I have a hankering to get a fortune told, and as ye have no doubt some slight with cauk and keel, I would fain hae the help o' your hand in that business."

The old woman looked at him with a keen and

inquisitive eye; and then turning round to Blondell, and raising her left hand over her eyes, as if the sun dazzled them, steadily also perused every trait and feature of his countenance. "Neither of you, I see," said she calmly, "would at this time trifle with the grief of a miserable old woman. What's your pleasure? Whose fortune would you have me read?"

"Come, come, lucky," cried our hero, "none of your antic cantrips with me. I have a notion that ye can spae best, when ye know something about the history of your customers; and that it's easier to read thirty years of a dead man's life, than three days of what's to happen to the living. Now the fortune that we want told is the murdered man's; and ye maun try in your canny way to get us some account of his green years, before the blight fell on him. Find out whether he has suffered the cross of faithless love, or treacherous friendship? What blink of an evil eye marred his flourishing? Or whether he has had occasion to dread or feel the enmity of any secret adversary?"

Blondell seemed to think, that perhaps the old

woman would not understand this sort of language, and added, "We wish, in fact, good woman, to know, if, in early life, there was ever any quarrel——"

Andrew checked him abruptly, saying, "Toot, toot, man, we'll no get at the truth, if ye tell what ye want. This carlin here can cleck lies enew to satisfy you, if lies would serve.—Gudewife, ye ken very weel what we want. Gang and learn a' ye can, and then come back as soon as possible."

The old woman, for about half a minute, stood erect and silent, as if she was inwardly pondering with herself; and then, as it were, coming out of her trance, she looked cheerfully at Andrew, and immediately left the room.

When she had retired, Blondell said it would be necessary to prepare something for the prisoners to read in their defence, whatever might be the course that circumstances might afterwards require him to pursue; and for this purpose he went to his own room that he might not be disturbed, Lord Sandyford, who had written to our hero, on hearing he had arrived, being then hourly

expected. It, however, occurred to Andrew, as the gipsies could not read, as Blondell stuttered, —as judges, however clear in their delivery, are seldom good readers,—and as he himself was a very bad one, that it would be of great consequence to obtain somebody to read the defence, upon the proper effect of which much might depend, both with the Court and the Jury.

In deliberating with himself on this point, the bold idea once or twice presented itself, that if Lord Sandyford could be induced to undertake the important task, the effect of his Lordship's rank, with the pathos and grace of his elocution, would be in the highest degree effective; and by the time the Earl arrived, he had resolved to speak to him on the subject.

Accordingly, next day, on his Lordship's arrival, after their first salutations were over, he said, "Although, my Lord, I have no doubt of the poor gipsies' innocence of the murder, yet there are great difficulties in the way of an effectual defence. In the first place, they can neither write nor read; secondly, Mr Blondell, whom I have

brought with me, to stand up for them, is a dreadful stammerer; and thirdly, your Lordship knows that the Judge is such a desperate drone, that were he to read the defence, the likelihood is, that he would croon the Jury asleep, instead of moving either their hearts or understandings to yield towards the prisoners. This fashes me, and I really am greatly at a loss."

"I should have thought," said the Earl, "that you would have provided a fitter advocate, than the one you seem to have chosen."

"I had my reasons," replied Andrew, "for what I have done; and could I but get any body with a rational portion of common sense, to read the paper that Mr Blondell is now preparing, I would not despair of an acquittal."

Lord Sandyford appeared a little struck with the first part of this remark, and said, "I certainly ought not to question that you have acted in this matter with your characteristic sagacity; but I am surprised that you attach so much importance to any thing that can be said in a paper. The Court and Jury will be governed entirely by the facts that come out in evidence."

Andrew then explained to him, that, for reasons within his own breast, he did not wish that any thing should arise to lessen the prejudice against the prisoners, till the whole case for the crown was closed; and he informed his Lordship of the light in which Blondell and himself, he had reason to believe, were considered both by the bench and the bar.

The Earl was perplexed, and said, "I am thoroughly persuaded that the method you have chosen is equally prudent and wise, although I do not very distinctly perceive in what manner it is to be of use to the poor prisoners."

"Of the effect," replied Wylie, "I have no doubt; but it's a terrible thing that there's no a man, wi' humanity enough, able to read the paper as it should be read. The Judge will mumble it; and were I to ask ony o' the barristers, the chance is, that they would turn with a snort both from it and me."

"I cannot think," rejoined the Earl, "that there is any such mighty difficulty in the way. Were it not contrary to the rules and forms of

the Court, I should have no objection to read it myself."

"That's a very charitable and kind proposition on your Lordship's part; and I am sure there is no obstacle of law against it. Ye'll be sitting, I'se warrant, on the bench; and when the time comes I can hand up the paper to your Lordship, as it were for the Judge, and your Lordship can then just in an easy way, ask leave to read the paper; for Mr Blondell writes a small narrow crabbed hand, and the Judge is an old man, that to a certainty never could well make it out."

The Earl smiled, and said, "This is too much. From the first, Wylie, you have been contriving to get me to undertake this business. I see through it all; and I give you credit for the way in which you have made the proposal come from myself. However, I will so far humour you in this task of mercy, as to play into your hands. But as Blondell writes such 'a sma' narrow crabbit hand,' it is highly necessary that I should peruse his paper before attempting to read it from the bench."

During the remainder of the evening, nothing

particularly passed with his Lordship, who, being somewhat fatigued by his journey from Chastington-hall, retired early; while Blondell and our hero sat up, in expectation of hearing something of the gipsy.

CHAPTER XXI.

INFERENCES.

About midnight the old woman made her appearance, with a haggard expression of exultation and triumph in her eyes. The moment that the waiter who shewed her into the room had retired, and the door was closed behind him, she rushed eagerly towards our hero, and raising her left hand, shook it mysteriously; at the same time elevating also the fore-finger of her right, she hurriedly began to speak to the following effect:—

"Fate and Death are on the road; I hear them coming; but I see an Angel of Glory standing beside you that will daunt them from passing to harm me or mine. The dead man and his murderer were plants of the same spring time; and when their heads were green, the blasted and the fallen was

the gayest and the proudest. They were boon companions; a lily grew in the valley, and they both stretched out their hands; the dead man won the flower, but from that day his fortune began to fade; the cry of a rifled maiden went up to heaven and brought down the mildew; and the spite of a thwarted lover, like the invisible fire that withers the summer bough, secretly worked its decay."

"Hooly, hooly, lucky," cried Andrew, while Blondell sat admiring the sybilline energy of the hag; "come down out of the clouds, and set by your broomstick; for though we can ettle a guess at the substance of your raving, we maun have something more to the purpose. The lily ye're making a' this ranting about was just some young lass; and the valley it grew in was, I trow, nothing else than some cottar's shed; so speak to the point, lucky, and fash us nae mair with your hieroglyphicals."

"I can but speak," cried the gipsy, earnestly, "as ye have heard. There is no malice like that of a disappointed lover; nor a deadlier foe than an angered friend. The grass has long been green

over Alice Cresswell's bosom, but the hate of her baffled lover could only be quenched in blood Thrice seven times has the leaf fallen since she was laid in the earth, and every time the fortunes of her betrayer were left barer."

"Weel, but tell us whar ye heard a' this ravelled clishmaclavers," exclaimed Andrew, peevishly.

The old woman, however, had no other way of expressing herself except in her gipsy jargon, and that was still more unintelligible. Blondell, however, interposed; and by dint of a long and patient questioning, ascertained that when Knarl and Sir Hubert were young men, they had both attempted to seduce Alice Cresswell, a game-keeper's daughter, and that Knarl became the favoured lover. In consequence of which, from being intimate friends, they became for some time deadly enemies; and that Sir Hubert, being a person of greater opulence than his rival, contrived to thwart him in all his undertakings, until he had brought him to the verge of ruin; that Knarl was perfectly sensible of his malign influence, although it was so managed that he could not openly charge him with any fraud or design; and took, on all

occasions, every opportunity of fastening a quarrel on his enemy, but without success. At last, by this intemperance having worked his own exclusion from the society of gentlemen, he fell into dissipated habits, which completed his degradation.

In this stage of his misfortunes, Sir Hubert then stepped forward, and, seemingly with great magnanimity, entreated him to forget the grudge that had so long subsisted between them, and generously offered to befriend him. Knarl knew his rival too well to trust much to the sincerity of his professions; but the pressure of distress, and that laxity of the sense of honour which adversity ever causes, overcame his scruples, and he accepted of a farm, on liberal terms, from his enemy. The conduct of the Baronet had all the outward characteristics of generosity, and the affair redounded much to his credit; but still Knarl suspected that something lurked at the bottom of the cup which had been so unexpectedly and so warmly proffered; for occasionally, when flushed with wine, he would give vent to his suspicions; and

on the day prior to the murder, something of this kind had taken place, with a threat of exposure.

Such was the substance of the information which the old gipsy had obtained. It seemed to present nothing available to the defence of the prisoners; and when the poor woman retired, Blondell shook his head, and spoke as if he considered their case hopeless. Not so our hero; he made no remark, but sat thoughtfully for some time; he then began to move about, and finally, to pace the room in perplexity, halting every now and then, as if he intended to speak, but as often checking himself.

Blondell, who by this time had acquired a profound respect for his sagacity, remained silent, watching his motions with interest and curiosity. At last Andrew resumed his seat, and said, "I think, Mr Blondell, this gathering of odds and ends by that auld wife will hae a powerful effect. My Lord, ye ken, has promised to read the defence; now ye maun put into it a hypothetical story, wherein ye will relate, in a circumstantial manner, something like this tale of Knarl; and ye'll suppose a man who has been so spited by misfortune, meet-

ing in a state of intoxication with some one that he had thought wronged him, and that a quarrel ensued; and when ye have set all this out to advantage with your best cunning, ye'll then take another turn, and describe the workings of the venom of resentment in the breast of his adversary; and with that art which ye know how to employ, ye'll represent that adversary yearning for revenge, and watching with great vigilance for an opportunity to satisfy his hatred—winding up with some supposed meeting by accident, under cloud of night, in a lonely forest, nobody near, nor eye to see, but only the stars of heaven. Do this, and we'll see what effect it has on Sir Hubert, who will no doubt be present at the trial; and by that we'll shape the line of our defence, and be regulated in the bringing forward of our evidence."

Blondell was not altogether satisfied with this irrelevant mode of proceeding, but Wylie urged him so strongly, that before going to bed he altered the paper which he had previously prepared for the defence, and it was ready for Lord Sandyford to peruse in the morning.

The trial excited a great deal of interest, and a

a vast multitude was early assembled round the Court-house. Among them the unhappy gipsy family stood near the entrance to the hall; and the crowd opened involuntarily as the Judges and the High Sheriff, with their officers and attendants, passed in state. The moment that the old woman saw them, she dropped on her knees; and the rest of her family following her example, knelt in a row by her side, and loudly clamoured to the heavens to send down justice.

The spectators were profoundly impressed by this spectacle, and made way with silence and solemnity for the unfortunate gipsies to retire from the spot. A few children who were in the crowd followed them, and stood round them in sympathetic compassion as they mournfully seated themselves on the steps of a door, awaiting the fate of their relations, who were in the meantime placed at the bar.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE TRIAL.

At the trial, the Earl of Sandyford and Sir Hubert Mowbray were seated on the bench, and his Lordship sat on the right of the Judge who presided. When the indictment was read, the prisoners pleaded Not Guilty, and the son was proceeding with great vehemence to assert their innocence of the murder, while he again acknowledged that they had plundered the body. But upon a signal from our hero, he suddenly desisted, and stood silent.

After a short statement of the case from the counsel for the Crown, the examination of the evidence commenced. The post-boys were asked the same questions which they had formerly answered before the coroner. Lord Sandyford's

groom was also interrogated to the same facts, and it was clearly established that the younger prisoner was one of the two persons who had been scared from the body. Several other witnesses proved, that they had found the watch and the trinkets of the deceased in the possession and on the person of the old man.

The case for the prosecution being thus closed, the spectators were convinced that the guilt was fully established, and the Court also wore a portentous aspect to the unfortunate prisoners. Sir Hubert Mowbray, who had evinced throughout the examination a troubled and eager solicitude, threw himself back in his seat, as if tired with some inordinate labour, and seemed relieved from the most intense anxiety.

After a short pause, the Judge inquired what the prisoners had to urge in their defence, and Blondell replied for them, that they had prepared a short statement, which they hoped the Judge would read to the Jury. The paper was accordingly passed by him to Andrew, who had seated himself, as if by accident, under Lord Sandyford,

and he gave it up to his Lordship. The Earl was a little agitated when he received it, but said to the Judge, in giving it to him, that as it seemed to be closely and cramply written, he would, with his permission, read it to the Court.

The Judge thanked his Lordship for his politeness, and said aloud, that " although the evidence adduced was really irresistible, yet that the prisoners in some respects might be considered fortunate in the accident of having their defence put into the hands of his noble friend, the Earl of Sandyford, by whom it would be read with an effect that could not have been anticipated, and listened to by all present with a degree of respectful attention, which, after what was proved in evidence, could scarcely have been expected."

At the conclusion of this address the Earl rose. His elegant figure, and prepossessing countenance, were of themselves calculated to beget the most favourable disposition in his auditors, and this feeling was excited into a sentiment of reverence, by the solemnity of the occasion, and the charity of the office he had undertaken. Unaccustomed, however, to take a leading part in so

mixed and such a numerous assembly, there was a slight degree of diffidence in his manner; perhaps it might be owing to the consciousness of being a party to the benevolent artifice by which the paper had been placed in his hands. It, however, had the effect of engaging the affection, if we may use the term, of the spectators in his favour, adding, as it were, a touch of something that drew its essence from compassion, to the conciliatory influence of his personal appearance.

The paper began with a simple description of the outcast condition of the prisoners, stating, that had they consulted their own feelings, they would have offered no defence, but allowed themselves to have been quietly conducted to the scaffold, not because they had committed any crime which merited a doom so dreadful, for they knew that neither the Court nor the Jury could do otherwise than believe them guilty.

"The evidence," said the defence, and the reader became pathetic, "is so strong, that we are unable to resist it—we were scared from the body of the murdered man—his property was found in our possession—what avails assertions of innocence against

facts so stubborn? But we are innocent—and in the face of evidence that would convict the irreproachable Judge himself before whom we are now arraigned, we declare ourselves free from the stain of this crime. Which, however, among you, has any respect for the declaration of two miserable vagrants, bred up to dishonesty, practised in deceit, and the natural termination of whose life, by almost all present, is considered as that which seems inevitably to await this poor despised old man, and the heir and partner of all his ignominy? My Lord, and Gentlemen of the Jury, the law of this land presumes that every culprit placed at the bar, is innocent till he has been proved guilty. —But are we so treated? On the contrary, my Lord and Gentlemen, lay your hands upon your own hearts, and say to Heaven, if you can, that you have not come to this trial with a general persuasion of our guilt, and in the investigation have not unconsciously construed the evidence against the friendless outcasts, rather than sought to find in it any extenuating circumstance. But why need we dwell on this—why contend against a fatality that cannot be resisted? Habit, educa-

tion, yea, the very letter of your law, the law by which you profess to give us justice, has taken from the vagrant gipsy all the common privileges of the subject, and pronounces him a criminal before he is even accused of any crime. Had we not stood in this original degradation before you—had we possessed, like the felons that are usually brought to this bar, the basis of any claim to be considered as innocent, then we should have entered courageously on our defence, and though we might not have succeeded against such evidence, to demonstrate our perfect innocence, we should have made you, Gentlemen of the Jury, hesitate in your verdict, and even yourself, my Lord, tremble, when obliged to pronounce the fatal sentence. In that case, we should have shewn that all against us is but presumptive circumstances. We should have demanded of the counsel for the Crown, to prove that the body was not stiff and cold, when the servants of Lord Sandyford removed it from the road; for, my Lord, and Gentlemen of the Jury, we are prepared to prove that fact; and we would ask you,—not you, but all—yea, the whole world,—whether it is

likely that two persons, who had hours before committed a murder on the highway, and under the cloud of night, would have exposed themselves to the hazard of detection, by going abroad in the morning to plunder their victim? The thing is incredible, and yet you must believe it, if you believe us guilty; for we shall show, by the witnesses for the prosecution, that they did find the body stiff and cold, at the very time when they detected us in the act of rifling it.

"My Lord, and Gentlemen of the Jury—You are to bear in mind, that could we have believed ourselves not previously considered by you as guilty, we would have shewn that the deceased was seen alive on the preceding night, not far from the spot where his body was found. Is it not probable that the murder was committed soon after that time? And if we can prove that we were then at a considerable distance, we would ask you to say, whether the persons who saw the murdered man at that hour on that spot, are not more likely to have done the deed themselves, than the unfortunate men whom the presumptive evidence.

(for it is only presumptive,) which you have heard, has prepared you to condemn? But you will think that the persons alluded to are freed from the risks of such a charge, by the integrity and virtue of their character. Yes, my Lord, and Gentlemen of the Jury, they are freed—no visible motive can be assigned to make it feasible, that they were likely to commit such a crime—while the hereditary infamy and poverty of the gipsies constitute warrantry enough to punish them for any offence. But is infamy the child or the parent of vice?—and is poverty always the mother of crimes? The shame that attaches to the outcast wanderer, is often but the extended visitation of ancestral sin—and in the unknown abysses of your own bosoms, have you never felt the dark gropings of hatred and revenge? Set the infamy that gipsies inherit from their parents aside—if your prejudicies can be moved to do such an act of justice—and restore us to that equality which men placed in the perils of the law are justly entitled to claim and to expect, and much of that persuasion with which you have believed us guilty will at once pass away from your minds. Then

think how many other incitements, as well as poverty, urge unhappy men to the commission of crimes, and you will not believe that poverty could alone be the instigator of this mysterious murder. Picture, for example, to yourselves two young men in the animation of youthful rivalry —their fortunes green and flourishing, and both in pursuit of the same mistress, with all that ardour which the energy of youth inspires—One of them is successful. Reflect on the mortification of the other—the grudge and the resentment which takes root in his bosom. Follow them in the progress of life—see the successful lover, flushed perhaps with his guilty victory, rushing deeper and deeper into pleasure, and finally sinking into ruin; while his adversary, perhaps disgusted by the failure of his love adventure, settles into a prudent, a calculating, and a worldly character. Carry your view farther, and in the wreck of his rival's fortune, see him stepping forward with a malicious generosity, which humbles while it aids, and taking his enemy by the hand, amazing the world by his disinterested kindness. Then look into the mortified breast of the humiliated

bankrupt, and contemplate the bitter feelings that a career of licentiousness has engendered, and which are darkly stirring and fomenting there. Is it to be supposed, that between two such persons any other sentiment can exist than the most implacable hatred, though the habitual prudence of the one, and some remaining regard to the estimation of the world, in the other, may still impose restraints which keep their respective animosities at bay? But suppose, that by some accident, in the course of years, they are brought together, immediately after some recent provocation on both sides, and in such a place, for example, and at such a time of night, as when this murder was committed? Suppose, also, that the malignant benefactor is attended by his servant, and the bankrupt is on foot—if, next morning, the bankrupt is found murdered near the spot where they met; and if it can be proved that his inveterate enemy, soon after they had passed each other, sent away the servant on a needless pretext, would not every man think, whatever was the character of the gentleman——Look to Sir Hubert Mowbray."—

Lord Sandyford himself was startled at this abrupt apostrophe, which had been added after he had perused the defence before coming into Court; and the alarmed emphasis with which he uttered it, produced an awful effect.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE TABLES TURNED.

THE words, "Look to Sir Hubert Mowbray," were written at the bottom of a page, and on turning over the leaf nothing was added. The Judge inquired what it meant, and Blondell immediately said he did not understand it; that the words must have been inserted by some mistake unknown to him. They were in fact supplied by our hero secretly, for he anticipated this effect; he had also abstracted the remainder of the defence.

"Mr Blondell," said the Judge, "unless you think fit, it is unnecessary to proceed farther in this sort of defence; I would advise you to call what witnesses you intend to bring forward."

The clear-sighted counsellor instantly acquiesced in this suggestion; and the Earl sat down, ponder-

ing on the singularity of the incident, while every eye in the Court was turned towards Sir Hubert Mowbray.

When order was restored, (for the agitation which the abrupt apostrophe had produced lasted some time,) our hero was placed in the witness's box, where he related with singular brevity and clearness the whole of his adventure with the gipsies; but he was designedly not asked by Blondell respecting the card. Lord Sandyford sat in admiration of his self-command, and the quiet and unobtrusive distinctness of his answers; but was troubled at the omission of so important a fact. Doctor Saffron was then called, and proved the hour at which Wylie had applied for admission. The post-boys and Lord Sandyford's groom were successively again placed in the box, and clearly established what was asserted in the paper, that the body was stiff and cold.

The Judge was so amazed at the turn which the examination was taking, that his hand shook as he took down the evidence. Suspicion darted from every eye on Sir Hubert; and several times it was observed that his lips became white, and a yellow

suffusion overspread his countenance, but still he kept his place.

In this stage of the proceedings Blondell paused, and requested that the minutes of the examination before Sir Hubert, and of the coroner's inquest, should be read. It was done accordingly; but in Sir Hubert's notes, instead of our hero's name and address—the suspicion of the old gipsy woman was confirmed—another name and address had been substituted.

"Where is the card?" said Blondell.

"It has been somehow lost or mislaid," replied Sir Hubert, with a faultering voice.

The Judge animadverted on the carelessness of permitting such an accident to happen.

"It is of no consequence," said Blondell; and in a moment after he added, "but I find, my Lord, that the card has not been lost. I crave, however, your Lordship's attention, and that of the Gentlemen of the Jury, to the singular fact, that it does not contain the name and address which has been read from the record of the minutes."

The patched card was then handed up to the

Judge; who, in passing it to Sir Hubert, looked him sternly in the face. The Baronet, however, still mastered his agitation sufficiently to deny that it was the card.

The prisoners, on hearing his denial, uttered a groan of rage, and an appalling murmur ran through the whole Court. Blondell, however, with inflexible serenity, went on with his business, and merely said, "I am sorry to trouble the Court; I should have questioned the witness, Wylie, as to this point; but, my Lord, the omission was intentional."

"I can believe that, Mr Blondell," replied the Judge, emphatically. "Let Wylie be again called."

He was accordingly placed in the box, and not only swore to the fact of having given the card, but also that of the visit which he had received from the gipsy woman; and his evidence was confirmed as to the visit by the constable to whom Jacob had given her in charge, and who could not divine, till that moment, for what reason he had been summoned as a witness.

A sound of dread and wonder murmured in the

Court, and was succeeded by the most profound silence, when Jenkins, Sir Hubert's groom, was called. His master, the moment he mounted the box, hastily retired; and it was indeed time, for his answers to a few simple questions, calculated to elicit the circumstances which he had stated to our hero in the stable-yard of the inn, convinced every person present that the suspicion attached much more strongly to Sir Hubert than even to the gipsies, although, in reality, no direct circumstance was clearly brought home. But so susceptible had every mind been rendered by the curious train of reflection which the written defence had been designedly drawn to produce, that every thing in the groom's evidence told with the force of a fact.

At this crisis an agitated howl of horror suddenly rose from the crowd assembled around the Court-house; the Judge started from his seat; and the Jury, as if actuated by some sublime impulse, proclaimed the gipsies innocent. In the same instant a hundred voices exclaimed, that Sir Hubert Mowbray, in a fit of distraction, had thrown himself from a window, and was killed on the spot.

The Court immediately adjourned; but before the gipsies retired from the bar, Blondell took an opportunity of giving them, in the presence of his brethren, the money which the old woman had brought to him, in her simplicity, as a fee. The foundation of his fortune was indeed laid; for the Judge spoke of his address and talents in terms of the highest admiration; the consequence of which was, that he was retained in almost every important cause; and although the impediment in his speech prevented him from ever becoming a popular pleader, he acquired great opulence as a chamber counsellor; and, through life, spoke of our hero as the original architect of his fortune.

On none, however, did the singular result of this important trial leave so deep an impression as on the Earl of Sandyford. His Lordship saw the pervading sagacity of his favourite in the whole skilful management of the defence; and when they met in the inn, after returning from the Court, instead of treating him with that wonted familiarity which proceeded from a sense of his own superiority, he addressed him with so much respect, that the change in his manner was assurance to

Wylie of the ascendancy which he might now assume over even this accomplished and highly endowed nobleman. Still, however, his original and indestructible simplicity, like the purity of the invulnerable diamond, underwent no alteration; he continued the same odd and whimsical being; and even while the Earl was seriously applauding the generosity and effect with which he had exerted himself in behalf of the gipsies, he began to fidget about the room, and to spout out his peevish surprise that they had not the manners to thank him. "No," said he, "that I care a pea-strae for the wind of their mouth; but I would just hae liket to have had a canny crack with the auld wife anent their slights and cantrips; for when a' trades fail, my Lord, I think I'll take to fortune-telling."

"And I know not an oracle that I would sooner consult," said the Earl, in a gayer tone than he had been hitherto using.

"Say ye sae, my Lord? then lend me your loof, and ye shall be my first customer."

In the freedom of the moment, the Earl laughingly held out his hand, which Andrew seized

with avidity; and after looking at it in silence for about a minute, his feelings overcame him, and the Earl started to find a tear fall in his palm.

"In the name of heaven, Wylie, what's the meaning of this?"

Andrew dropped the hand, and retired to a distance till his emotion had subsided. When coming again forward, he said, "My Lord, why will ye prohibit me from being of any use to you in that concern which lies nearest your heart? This day I have been an instrument in the hand of Providence to redd the ravelled skein of the poor gipsies, to whom I was, in a manner, under no obligation; but to you, who under Heaven have been my great benefactor, I am still but as barren sand. The complexion of the gipsies' guilt was as black as my Leddy's; your Lordship has seen it made as pure as the driven snaw. Why will you sit down in your delusion, and wear out the blithe days of life, like an owl in the desert? Od, my Lord, it's a fool trick; and ye maun thole wi' me till I tell you what I have discovered."

The Earl was disconcerted; but seating himself in a chair, listened while our hero related what he

had heard from Doctor Saffron respecting the Italian girl and the child; at the conclusion of which, he rose and immediately left the room. Andrew would have stopped him, and indeed stepped forward to take him by the coat, but his Lordship, with a hurried hand and an agitated look, shook him as it were away.

CHAPTER XXIV.

PARTY-SPIRIT.

We must now call the attention of our readers to a series of circumstances that flowed in another channel, but which at this point fall into the main stream of Wylie's story. Viscount Riversdale, the son of the Marquis of Avonside, and brother to Lady Sandyford, had been several years abroad, a voluntary exile, for reasons which neither his father nor friends were able to fathom. His conduct, indeed, like that of his more accomplished brother-in-law the Earl, was to them an inexplicable enigma; but instead of rushing like him into a career of dissipation and extravagance, he shrunk out of society, and abandoned himself to despondency and solitude. His health was naturally delicate, and a morbid sensibility, the symp-

tom either of genius or of weakness, constituted the principal feature of his character.

About the time he left college, the aurora borealis of the French Revolution began to brighten in the political horizon—a morning, which so many young and generous bosoms exalted by the inspiring legends of Greek and Roman virtue, considered as the beginning of a new day to the moral world, and the commencement of the millenium predicted by the oracles of Holy Writ. Lord Riversdale was among the number of those who devoutly worshipped the rising day-star. But Sandyford, who was then one of his most intimate friends, although he partook of the same admiration, was enabled, by the possession of a more commanding and perspicacious genius, to discover the meteoric splendour of the phenomenon; and he not only occasionally laughed at the glorious anticipations of Riversdale, but sometimes insinuated that his ardour would cool, and that he would yet be found among the champions of ancient institutions. This raillery was but the playful ridicule of a superior mind, amused with the raptures of a fond enthusiasm; and it was ex-

pressed in terms which never gave offence, though it often provoked the most vehement declarations of constancy to the cause of the new-born liberty.

At the time of the Earl's marriage, Lord Riversdale was returned to Parliament, and took up his residence in town with the Marquis, his father. According to the hereditary politics and party connections of the old peer, his Lordship was introduced to many of the most distinguished members of both Houses, who had adopted the opinions and views of Mr Burke; and it never occurred to his ingenuous mind, that the courtesies of social intercourse could be supposed to deteriorate the integrity of his public principles. Sandyford, however, warned him to the contrary; but a false pride made him glory in the ordeal to which he was subjected, and even to cultivate a greater degree of intimacy with some of the leading members of the ministerial party, than he would otherwise perhaps have done. Along with his father, he accepted invitation after invitation from the adversaries, as he considered them, of freedom; but still he assured his political friends, that he was invulnerable to the blandishments of power.

On the day when Parliament assembled for the first time after his election, he went with his father to the House. The Marquis had occasion to call on the minister, and they met him in Downing-street. Without the slightest consideration on either side, the minister was invited to accept a seat in their carriage; and on being set down at the entrance to the House of Commons, in ascending the stairs he took hold of Riversdale by the arm, and they walked in together. This was observed by his Lordship's friends in the House, and the most corrupt construction was put upon the incident; for they regarded it as the realization of a junction, which they had begun to suspect would be the result of the intercourse which he had so unnecessarily cultivated.

The infirm health of Riversdale made him suffer from the extreme heat of the crowded house, and he retired early, with the intention, however, of returning; but the division on the address took place before he came back, and this—the effect solely of constitutional infirmity—was attributed to political apostacy.

The same night, it was resolved, in the acrimonious spirit of that period, by those to whom he had in principle allied himself, that they should sever themselves from all communion with him. This rash determination, taken without inquiry, was as little honourable to them as it was derogatory to him; but the consequences smote him like the influence of a malignant spell. And when Lord Sandyford explained to him the cause of the altered behaviour of his political associates, he was so mortified at the thought of being considered so weak in virtue, and so flexible in principle, that he abruptly quitted London, and gave up his seat in the House of Commons. The humiliating idea preyed upon his spirits, and he fell into a low and querulous misanthropy, which at last assumed the character of actual disease. Advised by his physicians to travel, he went abroad; and during the interval which elapsed between the first session of Parliament, after Lord Sandyford's marriage, and the epoch at which we are now arrived in our story, he had continued wandering over the continent, without finding any relief from the anguish of his mortified sensibility.

His sequestration from public life was lamented by his father as one of the severest misfortunes; for he had formed high, perhaps inordinate, expectations from the abilities of Riversdale. Such indeed was the paternal partiality of the Marquis, that he could patiently endure to hear him expatiate on those hopes and prospects of perpetual peace and felicity, which the mob of Paris were supposed to be then unfolding to man, persuaded that his Utopian reveries, like the fumes of the fermenting vintage, which pass off as the juice resolves itself into the bright and generous wine, would evaporate with the warmth and enthusiasm of youth.

And he often entreated him to return home, and take what side he pleased in politics. "Let no filial sentiment of deference to me," said his Lordship, "have any effect on the free exercise of your judgment; for whatever difference may at present exist between our political principles, I know that you will in time see the true interests of your country in the same light that I do; and, like me, exert your best talents to uphold and promote them; therefore I again repeat, Come

home, and come free. All I desire is, to see you qualifying yourself in Parliament to take that part in the great affairs of the kingdom, which, I am proud to say, our ancestors have for so many ages sustained with such renown."

Riversdale, however, was deaf to all these entreaties; but a letter from his sister, written soon after she had taken up her abode at Britonsbeild Castle, produced the desired event. She informed him of all the circumstances which we have so faithfully described, and requested him to come to her; for the thought of living under the evil opinion of the world, and in the contempt of her husband, was become too much for her long to endure. The moment that he received this disconsolate and anxious letter he returned to England, and, on his arrival, went at once to Chastington-hall; for although Lord Sandyford shared in that aimless resentment, which the sense of mortification made him feel against all his early associates, he still entertained a profound respect for the honour and principles of his Lordship; and was eager, before seeing either his sister or father, to obtain from him some account of the

circumstances which had involved the Countess in such difficulties and distress. But when he reached the Hall, the Earl had set out to attend the trial of the gipsies, whither he resolved to follow him. Being, however, as we have mentioned, in delicate health, he travelled slower, and in consequence did not arrive till some time after the acquittal.

CHAPTER XXV.

A JOURNEY.

The landlord had assisted Lord Riversdale to alight from the post-chaise in which he travelled, and on his asking for the Earl of Sandyford, ushered him into the room where our hero was still standing, agitated with sympathy for the mental anguish which his patron was so evidently suffering.

Wylie, on Lord Riversdale's being announced, instantly recognized the brother of Lady Sandyford; for although he had never seen him, he was acquainted with his title and relationship, and an indescribable feeling of alarm at the moment, made him dart towards the pale and querulous invalid a shrewd and distrustful glance.

"I was told that my Lord Sandyford was here," said Riversdale, inquiringly, at the same time moving round to retire.

"He has just stepped out," replied our hero; "I expect him back—please to take a seat till he comes." He then added, somewhat diffidently, "Perhaps I ought to let him know that it is your Lordship who has called."

Riversdale was struck with the tone in which this was said, and sharply inspecting Wylie with his bright and hectical eye, said,—

"You are in his Lordship's confidence, I presume, from supposing that it may be necessary to give him time to reflect whether he ought to see me?"

Our hero, at these words, walked up close to his Lordship, and stopping with an air of resolution and firmness, said to him calmly, but with a sustained voice, "The Earl is my friend and benefactor, and I have just been speaking to him, maybe on that account, a thought ower freely; and therefore, if ye'll be advised by me, ye'll no seek to see him till we learn the upshot of my ex-

hortation, which was all concerning the calamitous state of that poor leddy, your Lordship's sister."

"Who are you?" exclaimed Riversdale, surprised at such freedom.

"A friend!" replied Andrew, coolly, to the sharp accent in which this question was peevishly expressed; and then he added briskly, "Indeed, my Lord, ye must submit in this matter to be ruled by me; for the Earl has of late grown a perfect spunky, and flies off at the head like a bottle of Champaign, whenever ony body speaks to him of my Leddy."

Lord Riversdale retired several paces, and took a chair, looking in amazement at the familiar and uncouth phenomenon before him. Andrew followed him, and also took a seat near him, saying, "My Lord, I redd ye harken to what I am saying. It has just come into my head, that it would be a great thing for our friends, if you and me, before fashing the Earl ony mair at this present time, could have a solid crack and confable with the Countess, in yon old warlock tower,

where she's sitting like a howlet.—What say ye till't?"

"This is the most extraordinary adventure I ever met with," said Riversdale. "There must be some singular cause for a person of your appearance——"

"What's the matter with my appearance?" cried Andrew, impatiently; "and what has it to do with prudence and truth? Your leddy sister, my Lord, or I'm far wrang, will be very glad to see me with you. In trouth, ye'll just have to come away, for ye're ower thin-skinned to be left wi' ane so short in the temper as the Earl is, at this time. There's ill blood enough among you already."

"I do not think," replied the Viscount, half smiling, "that there is, however, any great reason to apprehend a quarrel between Sandyford and me—we know each other too well."

"All that's very true," said Andrew; "but I'll no trust you, and for this plain reason—His Lordship's no willing to do your sister justice.—Noo, if ye're a man of spirit, as ye're a nobleman, what

can come out of such a case, but swords out of their sheaths?"

"It is impossible that Sandyford can ever act so basely!" exclaimed Riversdale, still more and more astonished.

"Whether it be possible or no," replied our hero, "I'll no take it upon me to predicate; but that it's true, is a certain fact."

"Then it is the more necessary that I should instantly see him," cried the Viscount, trembling with emotion, and rising hastily.

"Hooly, hooly," said Andrew, laying his hand on his Lordship's arm, and gently pressing him again into his chair. "Lordsake, but ye're a tap o' tow!—Sit down, and listen with discretion to what I would say. The devil's hyte among the folk."

Lord Riversdale resumed his seat, and our hero explained to him the system of self-affliction which the Earl had seemingly adopted, and described the circumstances which had come to his knowledge respecting the child, and the interviews between the Countess and Ferrers.

"From all this, my Lord, ye see there's still a mist hanging about her Leddyship, and considering the humour my Lord's in, I really think we had better see her anent the same."

Riversdale was struck with the sense that shone through the account which our hero gave of the Earl's situation and feelings, and could not but acknowledge that there was much which Lady Sandyford could alone explain.

After some further conversation on the subject, he therefore agreed that they should immediately set out for Bretonsbeild Castle, "and leave the Earl," as Andrew said, "to his own meditations; for we'll either make a spoon or spoil a horn by the journey, and the sooner the job's done the better."

A chaise was accordingly ordered, and before Lord Sandyford was informed of his brother-in-law's arrival, they were far on the road.

During the journey, however, the Viscount, who had been fatigued by his previous travelling, and his health being delicate and infirm, before they were half way to the Castle, complained so much,

that Wylie advised him to stop at an inn for the night; and this suggestion being adopted, our hero went forward alone to the Countess.

CHAPTER XXVI.

DISCOVERIES.

In the course of about half an hour after Lord Riversdale and Wylie had set out for Bretonsbeild Castle, the Earl returned to the room where he had left the latter, and found Blondell there alone. Without adverting to our hero's absence, his Lordship began to speak of the trial, and to express his admiration of the skill and discernment with which the defence had been conducted.

"The sagacity of Mr Wylie," replied the Barrister, "appears to me indeed still more and more surprising; for since the Court adjourned, several gentlemen who were present at the trial have come to me and thrown such light on the instigating motives of Sir Hubert Mowbray, that fills me with

awe and astonishment. The information of the old woman, considering her means of acquiring it, and the short time she had to make the inquiry, was truly wonderful; but the manner in which Mr Wylie conceived it might be rendered so available to the defence, seems to have been a providential inspiration."

"What are the facts that have since come to your knowledge?" said the Earl.

"In themselves," replied Blondell, "they are trivial; but in connexion with such a character as that of Sir Hubert—persevering, implacable, and proud—they are tremendous and appalling. It now appears, that on the day preceding the murder, Knarl and the Baronet met at Kidderborough Races, beyond the forest. Among other strangers who happened to be there, were several gentlemen who had known Knarl in his better days; and who, seeing him in the crowd at the bottom of the stand where they had so often before met him on equal terms, from a feeling of old companionship, invited him to come up among them. He had not, however, been long in the

stand till he was recognized by Sir Hubert, who reddened, as it was remarked, with indignation at his supposed presumption, and remonstrated with the stewards of the races against the impropriety of allowing a person of his condition and character to be seen among them. Knarl did not hear what passed; but when he received a hint from one of his friends that some objection was made to his appearance on the stand, he justly attributed the request that he should leave the place, to the unappeasable resentment of his old adversary. Nothing more, however, then took place. Knarl, on quitting the stand, retired from the race-ground."

"What you say is certainly impressive," observed Lord Sandyford; "but the inference I should draw from it would tend to persuade me that a quarrel probably took place; and that after all, Knarl may have been slain by Sir Hubert in self-defence."

"True, my Lord," said Blondell, "but other things have come out. The expulsion from the race-stand was a link wanting in the old woman's

discoveries. It has now been ascertained that Knarl, after quitting the race course, went to a public-house, where he sat sullenly indulging in solitary intemperance till he was quite intoxicated. Sir Hubert, after the race was over, dined with the stewards and a large party of gentlemen. While they were at dinner Knarl left Kidderborough alone on foot, and during the thunder storm took refuge in a shed, where several other persons who had been at the races were standing for shelter. Here the information of the old gipsy again comes to bear; for it was from some of those whom Knarl joined in the shed that she gathered her account of their renewed enmity."

"And what passed?" said the Earl eagerly, interested by the narrative.

"While the storm was still raging, Sir Hubert, attended by his groom, came up to the shed, and, dismounting, went also in for shelter—where he had not long been when Knarl recognized him, and taunted him in terms of great bitterness, accused him of a systematic determination to grind him to ruin, and upbraided him with the subtle

vengeance of that friendship with which he had deceived the rest of the world."

"How did Sir Hubert endure this?" inquired Lord Sandyford with agitation.

"He remained perfectly silent, till the infatuated Knarl, losing all self-command, threatened to lay before the world a history of their intercourse, the original motives of Sir Hubert's hatred, and the malignancy of the favours by which, after destroying him in the opinion of the world, he had sunk him for ever into the more horrible perdition of his own opinion."

"And what was the effect of all this?" exclaimed the Earl.

"It was noticed by the glare of the lightning," replied Blondell, "that Sir Hubert, who was standing with his hands clasped over his heart, and breathing shortly, scowled with his eyes turned askance towards Knarl.—'His look,' said the person who told me, 'though seen but for a moment, I shall never forget.'"

"I perceive," said his Lordship, "that you infer he at that time meditated the murder."

"Even so—and I am confirmed in this opinion," was Blondell's answer, "by the circumstance, that Sir Hubert abruptly called Jenkins the groom, who, it appears, was standing with the horses at some distance, and although the rain was then falling in torrents, immediately mounted, and returned to Kidderborough, professedly for the night; but certainly, it would seem, with no such intention, for when Sir Hubert got back to the inn, he ordered his servant to keep the horses still saddled. This I have now learnt from Jenkins himself—and as soon as the storm abated, they resumed their journey homeward, and rode with unusual speed till they reached the skirts of the forest. On entering the forest, Sir Hubert slackened his haste, and began to speak of his intention of going next day to Sir Thomas Fowler's fox-chase, a thing which he had never mentioned before. At last they came up with Knarl. The night being fine, and the moon bright, on seeing him before them, Sir Hubert clapped spurs to his horse, and passed him without speaking. Jenkins thought this was to avoid his abuse, but they had not rode far,

when the Baronet again pulled in, and desired the groom to go forward to the town, and order a chaise to take him over next day to the hunt. It cannot, therefore, be doubted, that the murder was most foully premeditated, and that the moment Jenkins had left him, the Baronet returned and perpetrated the deed."

"I know not why it is," said the Earl, "that we should feel satisfied at hearing guilt so clearly established.—But what has become of Wylie?" and his Lordship immediately rung the bell. It happened to be answered by one of his own servants, who, not aware of Lord Riversdale's arrival, but having seen our hero embark with him in the carriage for Bretonsbeild Castle, said, on being requested by his Lordship to inquire for Mr Wylie, "that he had left the town with a strange gentleman in a post-chaise."

Lord Sandyford was troubled at this information; he was sensible of having rudely quitted Wylie, in the agitation of the moment, and uneasy lest he should have offended his sensibility. Blondell seeing him disturbed, immediately re-

tired, and his Lordship, after pacing the room thoughtfully, ordered his carriage, and returned to Chastington-hall, leaving a note for Andrew, earnestly requesting him to follow him there as soon as possible.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A VISIT.

THE evening was far advanced before Wylie reached the Castle; and when he rung the bell at the gate, the Countess was seated at her solitary tea-table. On hearing his well-known and familiar voice in the passage, as he was coming along in jocular conversation with Flounce, she rose and opened the door to receive him.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Mr Wylie," she exclaimed, as she took him by both the hands, with a cordiality very different from the measured urbanity of her former politeness. He was not prepared for the friendliness of this freedom, and at the first was a little embarrassed; nor was he insensible to a feeling allied to sorrow, when, in-

stead of the splendid woman, whom he had been accustomed to see adorned and surrounded with the brilliant ensigns of gaiety and fashion, he beheld her pale, and dressed with extreme simplicity.

The Countess herself placed a chair for him near her own, at the tea-table; and before he had time to address her, said, "I presume you have been at Chastington-hall?" and her accents faultered as she added, "I hope you have left my Lord well."

Andrew replied drolling, but with a look which the Countess perfectly understood, "As to his being weel, that's a thing I canna undertake to swear to; but for a sign of his condition, I would say to your Leddyship, ony harl of health he has is aye about meal-time.—But, my Leddy, this is an unco awsome house for you to live in. I'm no surprised that ye should be so fain to see a gay gallant like me coming on a visitation. Ah, ye would need to make mickle o' your visitors, or they'll no stay lang; for there's but little mirth where the only spring that's played is by the wind

fifeing on the key-hole. I see your Leddyship is surprised at my coming, and ye dinna think I am here without an errand."

The Countess sighed, and made no reply, although Andrew paused, as if he expected she would. He then resumed, "Surely, my Leddy, this gait of making yourself a nun, is no what might have been hoped from a woman of your sense, and at your time of life."

"I have not renounced the world," said the Countess; "I am only waiting here——" And she paused confused, conscious that the ambiguity of her expressions was liable to be misinterpreted.

"Waiting?" said our hero eagerly; "for what are you waiting?"

"Do not misunderstand me," she cried hastily. "I am only waiting to see what is to be the result of this strange state into which I have been thrown. I feel myself entangled in a net, from which I cannot extricate myself. My fate is ravelled with circumstances beyond my control. The world may believe me worthy of the abandon-

ment that I suffer—the fruit of one trifling indiscretion. Conscious of my innocence, and confident that, sooner or later, I shall be indemnified for what I now endure, I wait patiently the natural development of the mystery with which I am involved."

"By the indiscretion, your Leddyship means, I suppose, following the rash counsel of that diplomatical body, my Lord Marquis, your father?"

"Your supposition is just. I have no other error of conduct towards my husband, for which I can be blamed with any severity."

"Then, if your Leddyship is sensible of that fault, what for will ye no try to amend it? If ye ran awa' from your gudeman in a pet, surely, whenever ye came to your senses, you ought to have gone back to him, wi' a napkin at your ee, an' it had only been a sham for decency."

"Why, Mr Wylie," said the Countess, smiling at the figure he had employed, "I think, when I left my father, and went to Elderbower to the Dowager, I did nearly as much as in reason

could be expected from a woman, that thought herself but half in the wrong."

"As to that I'll say nothing; but ye know that women—the present company, of course, excepted—are kittle cattle to deal with."

"Mr Wylie, this conversation is becoming painful to me. I am so circumstanced that I know not what to do. If I could see my way clearly, I should require no prompting." The Countess, after a pause of about a minute, added, "I will deal frankly with you; although I do, as a woman, think, that if Sandyford wished for a reconciliation, he ought, as a man, to come to me himself. It would be an act of grace and love, and I would ever esteem it as such. Yet, as a wife, I will stand on no such etiquette. Does he desire to live with me again? Say so, and I will instantly go to him, and endeavour to forget all the past, and to devote my life to promote his happiness."

Andrew was thunderstruck; he found himself in a dilemma that he had never imagined possible. He had formed no adequate conception of

the united strength and magnanimity of her L dy-ship's character; and exclaimed, "My Lord is a fool, and no sensible of his mercies, nor the value of the pearl he casts away!"

The Countess smiled at this warmth; and, pleased with the compliment, said, "Come, come, my friend, let us drop the subject. I see how it is—I know Sandyford better than you do—I have discovered his nature more by reflection since we parted, than by experience when we were man and wife. He will rather continue, against his conscience, and even inclinations, in error, than be, as he deems it, so weak as to acknowledge he has acted wrong. I cannot go to him unless he wishes it."

"I did not say," exclaimed our hero, glad to catch at this expression, "that he does not wish it. On the contrary, I do with sincerity believe, that nothing on earth would give him more pleasure than the sight of your Leddyship at Chastington-hall. But,"—— and he paused.

Her Ladyship saw him confused and diffident, the consequence, at that moment, of his reluc-

tance to advert to the affair of Ferrers. In fact, he was more satisfied by her sentiments and manner, than he could have been by any explanation; and after a momentary pause, in which he decided to say nothing on that subject, he resumed, in a lively key, "But no to talk about such melancholious concerns, I have brought blithe news. Your Leddyship's brother's come home, and will be here betimes the morn's morning. Poor lad, he's no very strong, and unco easily fashed; so I left him on the road to come on at his leisure." He then explained to her more circumstantially how they had accidentally met, and the motives which induced him to keep him from seeing Lord Sandyford.

The Countess, who had listened calmly to the whole narrative, said, with an accent that completely for a moment disconcerted our hero, "Why should you have supposed that there was any likelihood of the two quarrelling? Surely there is nothing in my case to provoke a quarrel."

"I'm no sure of that," said Wylie unguardedly. "In a word, my Leddy, the Earl is as dure

as a door-nail, and winna listen even to the vindication of your Leddyship's character."

The Countess looked for a moment wildly; but a few tears coming to her relief, she said, "I did not think that Sandyford cared so little for me."

The tone of pathetic dejection in which this was uttered pierced the heart of Wylie. He perceived the error he had committed, or rather the erroneous interpretation which the Countess had given to his words; and eager to set her right, said, "I doubt, my Leddy, it comes from another cause. He cares more for you than he will allow either himself or any other body to think; and I fancy that his contrariness is altogether of some misleart crancum about your caring nothing for him. However, we'll see what's to be said on this head the morn, when your Leddyship's brother comes. But it would save baith him and me a world of trouble, if you would just put your heel in your neck, and tumble at ance o'er to Chastington-hall, and come to a right understanding with your gudeman himself, without the interloping of any other friends."

The Countess smiled, and, during the remainder of the evening, turned the conversation into a lighter strain, chiefly relative to the state of her friends in town.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MAGNANIMITY.

The following morning was grey and lowering, and when Lord Riversdale approached Bretonsbeild Castle, which he had never before seen, the aspect of its old magnificence, and the walls and towers hoary with the lichens of antiquity, and darkened with the shadow of past time, impressed his imagination, and awakened associations of the most solemn and affecting kind. The reveries of his early enthusiasm had long passed away, and the horrors of that anarchy, which, under the name of Freedom, committed such crimes for the personal aggrandizement of a few intrepid adventurers, had produced the change that Lord Sandyford had predicted, and taught him to cling with filial love and admiration to the institutions

of his native land. It seemed to him as the Castle rose before him, over the mists which floated along the surface of the downs, and which gave to it the appearance of some majestical edifice, constructed by necromancy in the clouds, that it was a superb type of that vast and venerable moral fabric, which the wisdom, the achievements, and the virtues of ages have reared in this country; and he felt, as it were, rebuked by the genius of England, for having so long, from peevish motives of resentment, neglected to perform his proper part in those great controversies, which have for their object the perpetual renovation of the pile.

When he reached the gate, he was informed that our hero was abroad walking, and that the Countess had not then made her appearance. He was, in consequence, shewn into the breakfast-parlour, where he sat for some time alone, ruminating on the feelings we have described, and tenderly affected towards his sister, whom he had left the pride of beauty and the ornament of fashion, but had returned, to seek in a seclusion and solitude, where every object indicated neglect, ob-

livion, and decay. These reflections gave a colouring of melancholy to his mind; and instead of that peevish sensibility which had rendered him almost unfit for social intercourse, he became mild and compassionate, and was moved into a sad, but pleasing gentleness, that qualified him to listen with indulgence and pity to any narration of error or of sorrow. Accordingly, when, on being informed of his arrival, the Countess hastened to embrace him, he received her with a warmth of affection that was delightful to himself, and she was so much affected by his emotion and sympathy, that she wept profusely on his shoulder.

"Hey!" cried Wylie, who entered at the moment, and perceiving how much they were affected, was anxious to divert their attention, "is my Lord on wing already?"

"What do you mean?" cried Riversdale, disengaging himself from his sister.

"O, naething at all," replied Andrew. "But it's no the use and wont of welcoming, to be play-actoring in sic a tragical fashion. In trouth, my Leddy, and my Lord, it will not do, considering the job we hae in hand, to be singing, 'Wally,

wally, up yon bank, and wally, wally, down yon brae,' like Lady Bothwell, when her Lord had left her. We live in times when tears are gone greatly out of fashion; maybe love and affection do na burn the brighter for a' that. However, we should conform, and therefore I take it upon me to inhibit you from a' sort of opera-like antics, till we hae come to a right understanding wi' the breakfast-table. For I'm of a serious opinion that a weel-boiled egg, in a raw cold morning like this, is worth mair than a pint-stoup of salt tears, or a piper's bag of sighs and sobbing."

This whimsical address had the effect intended, and after a few other light and gay expressions, partly allusive to the object of the meeting, the party sat down to breakfast, with a degree of cheerfulness scarcely to have been expected from the impassioned anguish with which the Countess and her brother had embraced.

"Weel, my Leddy," said Andrew, when they had finished breakfast, and retired to her favourite room in the octagon tower, "I hae been thinking all night about you, and that whirligig, my Lord Sandyford—and I can mak nothing of your

case but this—you would fain go back to him, and he wishes you would come, but he has his doubts."

"Doubts!" exclaimed the Countess with agitation, and she added, with a sigh, "I cannot remove them."

She then recounted with a composed, but impressive voice, the whole circumstances relative to the child and to Ferrers, and entered into a very circumstantial explanation with her brother, respecting the pertinacious attentions of the maniac.

"It's a pity," said Lord Riversdale to the Countess, "that Lord Sandyford cannot hear you report this—his candour would, without further investigation, be satisfied."

"But I fear," replied her Ladyship, "that he cares little whether I am innocent or guilty."

"The deevil's in this world," exclaimed Andrew, "if folk must suffer wrong without the hope of redress."

"I should think," said Riversdale, pensively, "that were Sandyford once convinced of the fallacious appearance that has wrecked the happiness

of you both, he would not scruple to restore you to his affections."

"As for convincing," said her Ladyship, "that cannot be difficult. More than twenty witnesses can prove all that I have stated about Ferrers; and it was on that account, Riversdale, I requested you to come to England. I wish you to investigate the whole business thoroughly, and lay the result before my husband; not, however, in the hope that it will induce him to make any change in the determination he has taken. For long, long before the fatal paragraph, his heart was turned against me."

"Not his heart," said Andrew, quietly, "only his head—I dinna think he's very sound in the judgment about your Leddyship."

"Ah, Wylie!" exclaimed the Countess, "do not call his judgment in question—for my own feelings bear testimony to its rectitude and discernment—I wonder he endured me so long."

The Siddonian majesty and pathos in which this was said, made our hero thrill with admiration and awe; while Lord Riversdale, unable to suppress his emotion, rose, and walking to one of

the windows, stood for some time looking out, deeply agitated. He was, however, the first who broke silence.

"Augusta," said he, "I will see Sandyford. It is impossible that he can suffer such immolation. I once knew him—and he must indeed be deplorably fallen from his original brightness, if he can be insensible to the grief which dictates such a sentiment."

The Countess looked at her brother calmly for about the space of a minute, and then said, "Riversdale, I thought you knew me better. But no—for till lately I knew not myself. I will never be received by Sandyford in compassion—mark that—never be an object of his pity—no, not even of his generosity. I will take nothing less than his love—not that I say it is mine of right, but because I would now deserve it."

And in saying these words, she immediately quitted the room, leaving her brother at once perplexed and surprised.

"Weel, I think, my Lord," said our hero, "was ever twa sic deevil's buckies cleckit, to fash simple folk, like you and me, as this mighty

Madam and her flea-luggit Lord—Od's sake, if it werena for ae thing mair than anither, I would grip the twa by the cuff of the neck, and haud their noses to the grindstane—they deserve no mercy. But, my Lord, the sorrow's in them, or they get the better o' me. We'll e'en awa' to Chastington-hall, and see what Birky, or Beelzebub, or whatever ye like to ca' that thrawn gudebrother o' your's, has to say till't; for I'll no let them ding me, noo that my heart's set to mak them happy, in spite o' their teeth."

"You are an incomprehensible being," replied Lord Riversdale, "and I feel the force of your good sense constraining me to act, where delicacy, although it is my sister's case, almost makes me shrink from any farther proceeding."

"Poo! what's delicacy, my Lord," exclaimed Andrew, laughing, "but a bashful missy sort o' thing? I hae nae broo o' sic havers, when I'm in earnest; so we'll just take back the chaise your Lordship came hither in, and set off to Chastington, without ony more parley about the matter."

"I doubt," said Riversdale, "my health will not allow me to travel either so fast or so far."

"Noo, that comes of your delicates," cried Andrew; "if ye hadna been nursing your hypochondriacs to make them thrive, ye would never hae thought about the travel or the road. Od sake, my Lord, if ye're long in my hands, I'll put mair smeddum in you. So just come away at ance, and leave the Countess to play at the chucks with her thimble, a bawbee, and a tamarind stane, till we come back; indeed, my Lord, you maun gae wi' me, for I'm playing the truant o'er lang, and if Mr Vellum didna think I was on some business of Lord Sandyford's, I wouldna be surprised if he gied me a loofy when I gaed hame."

The impetuosity of Andrew succeeded, and they were, in the course of a few minutes, on the road to Chastington-Hall.

CHAPTER XXIX.

FORTUNE-TELLING.

After the trial, the gipsies, who had so abruptly left the town, proceeded straight towards Chastington, whither they had learnt our hero was expected to return with the Earl; and having encamped under the park wall, they gleaned from among the woodmen and labourers, something of the situation of Lord and Lady Sandyford, and of the familiarity with which Wylie was treated by his Lordship. The principal motive of this journey was, doubtless, dictated by gratitude, in order to offer their thanks, in a more formal manner than they could well do in the town where they were so much objects of interest.

That there are persons in the world who not only pretend to possess, but believe they actually

do possess supernatural discernment; and also a very numerous multitude, of all degrees and ages, who give them full credit, cannot be denied. Far, therefore, be it from us to encourage any scepticism to the prejudice of a faith so venerable; especially as it was certain that our old gipsy woman had the most perfect confidence in her own oracular powers.

On the morning after the trial she was lingering about the portal of the Hall, when the Earl came out, and she immediately addressed him. "We have come," said she, "to thank you and the clear spirit in the small tabernacle, for the salvation we enjoy. You have fee'd us, by kindness, to do your bidding wheresoever the task may lie. Is there aught wherein our hands may work, or our spirits toil, or our skill serve, or our good will aid?—Speak, and give us pleasure!" And she paused abruptly, and looked steadily in his Lordship's face.

"Why do you look so at me?" exclaimed the Earl, surprised, and in some degree offended.

"There's a wish in your heart, my Lord," was the reply, "that you hide from yourself—a vision

in your dreams, my Lord, that you banish on waking."

The frame of mind in which his Lordship was at the time, and the tinge of melancholy with which his reflections had for several months been embued, made him peculiarly susceptible to fanciful impressions, and he felt something akin to dread at this singular apostrophe. The sharp-sighted gipsy perceived the influence of her crafty mysticism, and spoke in a low and confiding accent, to the following effect:—"There are times and seasons when the stars above favour intents below, when the moon searches the blood, and the planets point, with their fingers of light, to the progeny of coming time. In this hour their benign influences are upon me: and would ye read a page in the book of destiny, I can unclasp the volume. Have faith in me when the spirit of oracles is upon me; when it departs, you will then ask my wisdom in vain."

The Earl endeavoured to smile at this rhapsody, while he trembled at the prophetic energy of the sybil, and at her request held out his hand.

"This palm is empty," said the old woman.

The Earl laughed, and put half a crown into it from his pocket.

The old woman flung the money with contempt away, and added, with tremendous solemnity,—"That palm is empty, and yearns to press its fellow in kindness.—What do I see?"

"I hope no evil!" said the Earl, thrown off his guard.

"I thought," said the old woman calmly, "that I had seen the mark of a broken wedding-ring,—that would betoken death;—but I am mistaken, the sign shews only"——And she paused.

"Why do you hesitate?" said Lord Sandyford, deeply and strangely affected.

"The lamp of our skill," replied the gipsy, "burns but dimly—all things are not seen as we would see them. But if I might speak without offence"——

"Certainly," said the Earl.

The sorceress then looked at him severely, and said, "I speak with spirits, and yours communes with mine. The wedding-ring I saw is not

broken,—you but wilfully hide a part within your own flesh, causing to yourself suffering and sorrow."

The old woman then broke out with the energy of the Pythia, and predicted, in a long rhapsody of meaningless images, an endless life of conjugal bliss to his Lordship, which had the effect of recovering him from the brief influence of the superstitious sentiments she had inspired; but although he laughed at her predictions, his mind retained the colouring; and he returned into the house, after liberally rewarding her, thoughtful and uneasy, under a mingled charm of hope and apprehension, incredulity and faith.

In the meantime our hero and Lord Riversdale were on their way from Britonsbield Castle to Chastington. They reached the Sandyford-Arms at the park gate, just as the old woman was returning from her interview with the Earl. Andrew immediately called to the post-boys to stop; saying, in the same breath, to the Viscount, "That auld wife is another Witch of Endor, or a Maggy Lang; I wonder what she can have been doing at

the Hall.—Hey, lucky !" he then exclaimed, addressing himself to her.

The gipsy came up instantly to the carriage-window, and with her characteristic rhodomontade, began, much in the same style as she had addressed Lord Sandyford, to proffer the services of herself and all her tribe.

" Maybe," said our hero, " I shall have a bit job by-and-by in your way, when I have hens and cocks, or silver spoons, that can be stolen. But what have ye been doing with my Lord ?"

" I have read his fortune," was the emphatic reply.

" Ay, a wheen lees nae doubt—and what said ye ? cried Andrew.

Lord Riversdale sat surprised at their conversation, and the wild and haggard appearance of the old woman, as she thus replied : " I saw his empty palm, and his wedding ring, that is not broken, but only hidden in the throbbing flesh—a cloud is around him, but it is not night—the summer of his days is yet to come, and along the avenue of future years, when he lies down to sleep on his mother's bosom, I beheld the rose of beauty and

the oak of manhood bend their blooming and green heads in honour over him."

"Awa, awa, the deil's ower grit wi' you!" cried Andrew, endeavouring to laugh, while he looked at Lord Riversdale, and inwardly confessed his faith in what she said; "Hae, there's half-a-crown for boding so meikle luck to my Lord, and when I have time, I must see if ye can wyse to me a bonny lass with a heap o' siller."

The fortune-teller, in the instant, was evidently kindling again into another paroxysm, but Lord Riversdale peevishly pulled up the window, and requested the post-boys to drive on. "Is it possible," said he, "that Sandyford could listen to the hag's nonsense?"

"Trouth, my Lord, it's very possible, and I wouldna be surprised that she had done mair to bring him into a right way of thinking than both of us, without her help, could have done."

"You seem to undervalue his Lordship's good sense, if you expect any such effect," was the sharp remark of the Viscount.

"Ye're a' wrang, my Lord," replied our hero. "If the Yerl had as little sense as the rest of the

world, it might be so; but he's what's ca'd a man o' genius, and he'll create, by his own ingenuity, something rational out of the auld wife's raving, that would never enter ony common head."

In this sort of conversation they continued speaking, till the chaise arrived at the portal of the mansion. On alighting there, Lord Riversdale was conducted to one of the drawing rooms, and our hero alone sought the Earl in the library, where he was sitting by himself in a reverie, and perhaps unconsciously still under the influence of the gipsy's rhapsodies.

CHAPTER XXX.

A FRIEND.

"THIS winna do," cried Andrew, seriously, on observing the absent and melancholy look of Lord Sandyford; "your Lordship's like a fat goose, drapping awa'; and if ye're no ta'en frae the fire ye'll soon no be worth the taking."

"Ha, Wylie!" exclaimed the Earl, "what has become of you? Why did you quit me so abruptly?"

"Me quit you, my Lord! How can that be said, when you stotted yoursel out o' the room like a birsled pea?"

"Well, but where have you been? What have you been doing?" rejoined his Lordship.

"It'll require thought to answer twa questions at once; and therefore I think we may as weel,

for the present, set them bye hands, for I have got dreadful news," said our hero, still gravely.

"Indeed!—What are they?—Have you heard any thing of Lady Sandyford?" cried the Earl, eagerly.

"Your Lordship, ye ken, has debarred me from speaking anent her case, poor Leddy; but what I have heard is another sort of thing," replied Andrew, still preserving the most serious countenance and voice.

"Have the French landed?" said his Lordship, gaily, endeavouring to rouse himself out of his moping humour.

"I'll no say the King's enemy has come to England; but somebody has come that your Lordship, I'm thinking, will no be overly pleased to see—Lord Riversdale."

"Yes," said the Earl, "he has come home; I heard of his being here."

"Yes, he's come; and it was at the request of my Leddy, the Countess," replied Andrew.

"Was it by your advice?" inquired his Lordship, sternly. But our hero was none intimidated by the severity of his manner; he felt, indeed, like

the surgeon who probes the wound of a patient whom he esteems; and he disregarded the pain or the irritation which he at the moment occasioned.

"I think, my Lord," said he, earnestly and unaffectedly, "that it is not possible to prevent me from speaking to your Lordship about my Leddy. Things come round that oblige me to interfere, as if I were ordained by Heaven to be a mean of mending your broken happiness. Look, my Lord, how the course of fortune works to that end; I was a friendless lad, and ye gied me a nest-egg out of the magnanimity of your own free will; that was as a retaining fee to make me serve you, through weel or woe, a' my days. Then came my forgathering in the wood with the gipsies, which led me to get a glimpse of the history of the bairn of the Rose and Crown. Syne came on the crookit case of the trial; wherein the hand of an over-ruling Providence was made visible, as if to admonish your Lordship to have some confidence in me, your bound and obligated humble friend and true servant. Then when ye refused to do justly, and to love mercy, as I would have counselled your Lord-

ship, ye turned your back upon me, and left the room; but Fate's stronger than man. My Lord Riversdale, when ye were gone, came in—a very wonderful and mysterious thing, my Lord; and although he's no a very placable commodity, he listened to reason, and we have been thegither to hear what the Countess had to say for herself."

"And what did she say?" exclaimed the Earl with emotion; for our hero had skilfully turned this address to chime in unison with the mood in which the gipsy's prediction had left his Lordship; but suddenly checking himself he added, proudly, "Wylie, I think this is useless conversation. Though Lady Sandyford were innocent of the suspected guilt, that fact would make no change in my determination. I will not disguise what you see clearly enough—that I still bear towards her much of my early affection; and often I think to myself that surely she is not naturally that automaton which she has ever been with me. But it is impossible for me to submit again to lead with her the life that we have so miserably led together."

"That," said Wylie, "may be a very rational resolution in the opinion of your Lordship; but

it is, I'm thinking, needful that it should be explained to the satisfaction of others. Lord Riversdale will no be overly content that his sister should dree the penance of an ill-doer, merely because your Lordship doesna think she has been so cordial with you in all your vagaries as in the thoughtlessness of youth ye maybe expected."

"I do not think that I'm obliged to enter into any explanation with Lord Riversdale on the subject. Lady Sandyford went away of her own accord."

"That's no the point," cried Andrew; "that's no just what I was ettling at. Lord Riversdale has a right, and the world has a right, to know why it is that your Lordship is to be allowed to indulge your own fancies with impunity, to the damage and detriment of a noble Leddy."

The Earl looked amazed at the intrepidity with which this was expressed, and then said, "There is something about you, Wylie, that prevents me from quarrelling with you; but had any other man spoken to me with such an accent——"

"You would have done well to listen to him," interrupted Andrew, calmly. "My Lord, ye're

in the wrang; ye're far wrang; ye may set up the golden image of your own opinions, but no honest man will bend down and worship before it; especially the like of me, who, for my own credit, would have your Lordship beloved and respected. Your kindness to me, I would reckon a disgrace to endure, if I didna think your Lordship, by nature and habit, a man from whom it was an honour to be so favoured as I have been. Therefore, my Lord, you will have to see Lord Riversdale."

"I will not, Wylie, nor any other man on the subject: I do violence to my own feelings in enduring to be so lectured by you."

"I never doubted that; and if there wasna a restraining power of inordinate civility about you towards me, ye wouldna have tholed the half of what I have said, half so long," cried Andrew, briskly.

"By Jove!" said Lord Sandyford, scarcely able to preserve his temper, "this is driving me to the wall with a vengeance;" and he rose and walked to one of the windows. Our hero, who had been standing during the whole conversation, waited in

silence for about a minute, and he then said, "Shall I ring the bell for Lord Riversdale?"

"Is he in the house?" cried the Earl, startled by the question.

"Yes," was the cool answer; "he came with me; and the sooner the business is done the better."

His Lordship made no reply, but walked several times hurriedly across the floor, turning up the curls from his forehead with his hand, and breathing thickly. Andrew was alarmed at his agitation, and the struggle which for some time he evidently made to controul his feelings, but without effect; and said, in an accent of sorrow and anxiety, "I have gone too far; your Lordship is ill."

"Not farther than a friend should go—not farther than a friend," exclaimed the Earl, but without looking at him.

Several minutes of silence succeeded; during which his Lordship so far mastered himself that he sat down and said, with considerable ease, "It must, I perceive, Wylie, come to that at last. I will see Riversdale, but not yet; in the course of a short time bring him to me."

Our hero immediately moved to retire; but in glancing back towards the Earl he was struck with the ghastly paleness of his countenance, and stopped. "Wylie," said his Lordship, with a voice of the most penetrating pathos, "you have made me feel that I have been acting an unworthy part; not only my happiness, but my honour is in your hands."

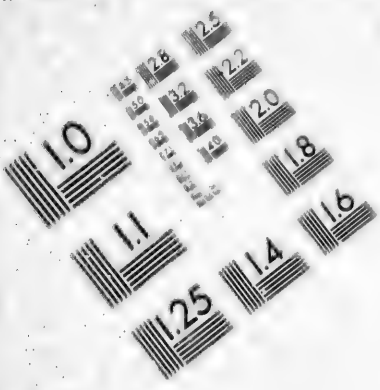
Andrew was profoundly affected, and took two steps towards the Earl, with the intention of saying something; but his tongue refused its office, and he turned suddenly round and quitted the room.

CHAPTER XXXI.

DECISION.

The interview between the Earl and Lord Riversdale was conducted with some degree of formality on each side. The conversation was opened by the latter, expressing his regret at the unhappy incompatibility of mind, which had caused a meeting of so cold a character between them; and he thence took occasion to revert to the circumstances connected with the child and with Ferrers, observing, how easily it would have been to have proved the guilt of Lady Sandyford, if the slightest inquiry had been instituted.

"Had it been of any consequence to me personally, no doubt," replied the Earl, "I should have instituted the investigation you speak of.



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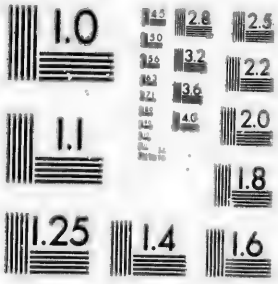

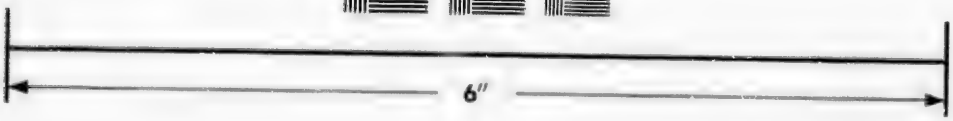

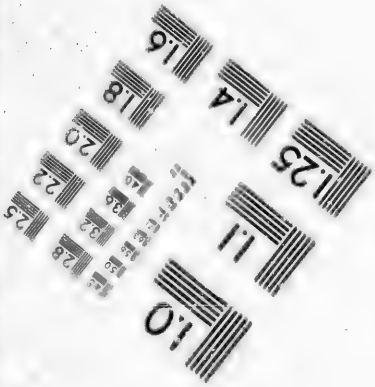

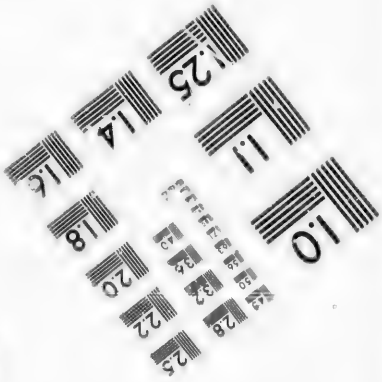

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But feeling as a man of honour, that I could with no justice take any legal steps against her Ladyship, it was my motive to allow her to enjoy all the benefit of that forbearance."

"But my sister is innocent, is pure from all stain," said Riversdale, with animation.

"I rejoice to understand so," was the calm and polite remark of the Earl.

"What then is to be done?—Why is she to suffer all the consequences of imputed guilt?" cried the Viscount, somewhat sharply.

"My Lord," replied the Earl, "do not let us part under any misconception of this unhappy business. I have never ceased to love your sister, and I shall be proud to do every thing to promote her happiness. She lives but for the admiration of the crowd, and I will supply her to the utmost limit of my income to gratify her vanity—But only on this condition, that I hear of her no more."

"She will reject with scorn all pecuniary obligations. I suspect, my Lord, that you do not know her worth," replied Riversdale, with an accent so bitter, that it almost threw Sandyford off

his guard. He, however, maintained himself so far, as to say coldly,—

"Certainly I do not know her—if what I propose will not indemnify her for the loss of my company. But, my Lord, I would beg your attention to one simple truth—we were for years together man and wife—in all that time she saw me plunging from error to error, rushing onward to ruin. Did it ever occasion to her a pang? Did she ever make one effort to check my infatuation? Or did ever the lucid intervals of contrition draw from her one word of soothing or of commiseration? No man need speak to me of the powers of Lady Sandyford's mind—none could be more surprised than I was at seeing such derogatory guilt imputed to her—none questioned more the complexion of the evidence by which it seemed confirmed—I rejoice that she has convinced you of her innocence—I believe her most entirely innocent—not merely because, as you say, her guilt, were she guilty, could be so easily proved; but because her declaration is in unison with the opinion which I entertain of her character—a moral persuasion that strong evidence indeed would be required to

shake. But I would as soon take one of these china jars into my bosom for a wife, as the cold, the formal, the not less artificial Lady Sandyford. It is in vain, my Lord, that you tell me of her personal innocence—she has been to me not only the cause of much misery, but an enigma, that has made me doubt the value of my own senses. For I do confess to you, that I have often thought there were the elements of great sensibility in your sister, but they as often eluded all my endeavours to call them forth—while she herself had no sympathy for others."

Our hero, who was present, and had hitherto sat silent, here interposed, and said, "True, my Lord; but now she kens what drinkers dree, for humiliation takes the stone out of the heart, as my auld schoolmaster used to say, when he punished the pride of camstrarie laddies—and her Leddyship's a creature of a new birth."

The explanation which Lord Sandyford had giver of his feelings, made a profound impression on the sensitive and too delicate Riversdale, and he remained, after this address of our hero, for

some time silent and thoughtful. He then rose, and said to the Earl,—

"My Lord, I enter into the full feeling of your sentiments, and will proceed no farther in this business. I lament the misfortune of my sister, but I fear it is beyond remedy."

The Earl bowed, and was changing the conversation to some general topic of the day, when Andrew started up, and cried, "Heavens and earth, sirs! are ye in your right senses? Is all my wark, and pains, and trouble, to end in a clishmaclaver about the hobleshow in France?—My Lord, how is this?—And you, Lord Riversdale, are ye doited?—Is Leddy Sandyford to pine in grief, under the cloud of dishonour, because the ta'en o' you makes blethers sound like sense, which the other takes for gospel?"

And in saying these words, he abruptly left the room, and without ceremony throwing himself into the post-chaise in which he had come with Lord Riversdale, and which still stood in the court, he was beyond the Park-gate, and on the road to Bretonsbeild Castle, before the two noblemen recovered from the astonishment which his vehemence and sudden departure had produced.

He reached the gate just as the Countess was sitting down to her early solitary dinner. Her Ladyship saw, as he precipitately entered, that he brought some important news, and ordering the servants to retire instantly, rose from table.

"Yon daffodil, your brother, and that corky, your gudeman, havena as muckle sense in baith their bouks as your Leddyship has in your wee finger; so ye maun just come away with me to Chastington-hall," exclaimed Andrew, "for I wouldna be surprised to hear of their colleaguing to put you to death."

Lady Sandyford resumed her seat, and said, "What do you mean?"

"What do I mean!" re-echoed our hero, "that ye're o'er lang here—I'm no, however, in a composure to tell you all the outs and ins of what has passed. But my Lord says ye're a china flower-pot—and for that he'll no take you back; and your willy wally of a brother sympathizes with the gross nonsense. Noo, my Leddy, be what ye are—come with me to Lord Sandyford—his heart is yours, if he thought ye had ane to give in return. Confound him with your worth, and with

that noble spirit that has made you feel so lowly; shine out with a glorious acknowledgment of past errors, and I'll lay my lugs the summer of baith your days is yet to come."

The Countess smiled, and said, "I perceive my brother has given me up, and that you alone are my friend. I will go with you—it is an atonement that I make for the rashness of following my father's advice; and my heart derives an assurance from your warmth, that Lord Sandyford will do justice to my endeavours to recover his affection."

"That's a braw leddy, and ye'll get a bawbee to buy an apple at the fair," exclaimed Andrew, in that sort of kindly admiration with which a child is praised for good behaviour.

CHAPTER XXXII.

LOVE IN A DICKEY.

From a sentiment of delicacy towards Lady Sandyford, on account of the feelings with which she was at the time agitated, our hero not only declined a seat in her carriage, but insisted that her amiable Abigail, Flounce, should mount the dickey with him; for being driven by post-horses, it was in consequence empty, her Ladyship not choosing to take any of her father's servants along with her.

"Up, Mrs Flounce," said he, as she was on the point of stepping into the carriage after her mistress; "up aloft—I'm going with you, and we can court there so cosily, who knows but ye may get a smart husband before long?"

Flounce was one of those sensitive maidens,

who never happen to be seated near a man without thinking of a lover; and she replied, with a giggle, as she eyed the dickey, "Don't be foolish —don't talk such stuff to me."

In the meanwhile he had shut the carriage-door.

"Weel, weel," said Wylie, "we'll speak of that again; but mount, my dawty." And with that he assisted her into the dickey, and was immediately at her side.

"Flounce," said he, when they were seated, "I have long had a great desire to hae some pleasant and canny conversation with you; for I hae a notion that ye're a lass of no small discretion."

The bosom of the inflammable Abigail beat quickly, and she replied, "I beg, Mr Wylie, that ye'll not talk none of that there nonsense to me; for I can assure you, sir, that I don't like no such larking; so I beg you'll be quiet."

"E'en's ye like, Meg Dorts!" exclaimed our hero, glad of an opportunity to end the badinage, which he was really at that time not in a humour to carry on, and he remained silent—sulky, as

Flounce thought, on account of the proper spirit she had shewn; but at last she began to fancy, that perhaps she had been a little too hard-hearted.

In the hurry and occupation of his mind, Andrew had entirely neglected to think of any dinner; but now that he was in some degree relieved from his anxiety, and driving as merrily along in a fine bracing air, as four post-horses could bear him, Nature, who never fails to vindicate any negligence, craved at last her due share of attention, and he felt himself exceedingly hungry. Entirely forgetting what he had been saying to Flounce, though it engaged her most serious cogitations, he again addressed her, with a slight accent of pathos in his voice, "Od, Mrs Flounce, but I feel something very queer about my heart."

"La!" cried the Abigail, not displeased to have the conversation renewed—"How can you go for to say such things, Mr Wylie?"

"It's as sure as death; and unless I get something soon to comfort me, I dinna think I'll be able to stand out the journey," was the unaffected reply; to which he added, glancing at a basket which Flounce held in her lap, and from which

the neck of a pint-bottle protruded from the midst of tawdry second-hand artificial flowers, and knots of ribbon, "What have ye got in that basket?"

"Nothing for you," said she, with a giggle.

"Robbery!" exclaimed he, in a jocular tone; but altogether unconscious of what was passing in her bosom—"Robbery is justifiable, when it's a work of needcessity; so I hae a great mind, Flounce, to see what ye hae hidden aneath thae gumflowers."

"That you sha'nt, take my word on't," replied Flounce, with a jocund tartness; "so keep your distance, I say, and not offer for to go such lengths with me."

"Noo really, Flounce, this is very cruel of you; for my heart begins to fail me, and I would be vastly obligated for ony thing of a cordial nature that ye can bestow."

The tender damsel began to feel her severity yielding to this sincere importunity; but still, for the honour and dignity of the sex, she was determined not to be lightly won, and she replied, "Mr Wylie, I would have you to know that I don't like any such insinivations."

"Very weel," cried Andrew, laughing, "if you won't surrender at discretion, I'll tak you by storm;" and a struggle ensued, in which Flounce made a most Amazonian resistance.

Our hero, however, was successful; but instead of seizing her by the hands, and pressing them with a lover's ardour, he took hold of the basket by the handle, and wrenching it from her grasp, flung her gumflowers away, and drew out a cold veal-pye, which, with the pint-bottle—and that contained cherry-brandy—Flounce had provided for her own particular solace.

Flounce at first affected a Juno-like indignation at the rape of the basket; while in her secret bosom palpitations of delight reconciled her to the outrage. But as she was declaring her displeasure of the monstrous rudeness, and enjoying, at the same moment, the sweet anticipations of such an ardent passion, Andrew laid voracious hands on the pye, which quickly disappeared, and he completed its obsequies by a draught from the bottle.

"I'm a great deal the better o' that," said he, as he coolly handed back the basket, which Flounce

examined as she received it; and seeing the pye had disappeared, cried, "Come, come, Mr Wylie, none of your tricks upon travellers. What have you done with the pye?"

"What hae I done wi't?—Put it to the use for which it was created. I hae eaten't, and a very good commodity it was. The spice, I trow, wasna spare't."

"Well, to be sure, this is one way of making love," said Flounce to herself.

"It was a most merciful thing," resumed our hero, "that ye brought the pye with you, Flounce; for really the wind had so gaen about my heart, that I was growing faint."

The mortified Abigail sat amazed, and at a loss what to say or do. Sometimes she eyed her companion disdainfully askance; at others, she looked into her empty basket, as if to ascertain the actual disappearance of the pasty; and anon she darted her keen eyes forward, and elevating her neck with irrepressible ire, gave her head two or three brisk shakes.

"What gars you snuff the wind at that gait,

Flounce?" said our hero. "I'll buy you twa bigger and better pyes for't ony day."

But the indignant waiting-gentlewoman was not to be conciliated by any such sordid promises. Indeed, what woman, who believed herself an object of the most tender solicitude, could keep her temper, on discovering that all the eagerness, which, to her fond fancy, seemed so like love, was prompted by a base and vulgar appetite to possess her pye? Accordingly, during the remainder of the journey, she was both dignified and distant to our hero; and when he attempted to renew his familiarity, after his hunger had been so effectually appeased, she repulsed him with indignation. He was, however, rather amused than disconcerted by her scorn, and took fifty ways of tormenting her, until, no longer able to bridle her rage, she assailed him with such a volley of epithets, that, by the time they reached Chastington-hall, they had come to decided hostilities, and she would not permit him even to assist her to alight from the dickey; the consequence of which was, that her foot slipped, and she came

plump down upon the pavement, to the infinite diversion of the post-boys and of the servants, who, on hearing a carriage enter the court, had come flocking from all parts of the mansion.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE RECONCILIATION.

For some time after Wylie had so abruptly quitted the Earl and Lord Riversdale, they sat in visible perplexity; a desultory conversation was maintained, but so broken, and with such long intervals of silence, that it was evidently the result of constraint; and that their minds were wandering to other objects of dearer interest.

At last Riversdale rose to go away, without having once again alluded to the situation of his sister; and he was too much at a loss to divine the cause of our hero's flight and absence, for he was but slightly acquainted with his direct and plain-dealing humour to express what he felt at a behaviour which to him seemed at once so extravagant

and inexplicable. Not so the Earl; the idea once or twice occurred to him that Andrew was gone to bring the Countess herself; but he suppressed it, in the persuasion that he would not venture to take so great a liberty. It, however, had the effect of keeping him also silent; and perhaps it unconsciously induced him to request Riversdale to stay dinner, with more earnestness than mere politeness required. Persuaded that Andrew was engaged on some business connected with the object of the Viscount's visit, he was desirous that the result should be ascertained before they separated; but the mingled feelings with which he was agitated prevented him from speaking on the subject.

The forenoon was passed between them as forenoons are commonly passed by noblemen in the country. They conversed on various topics, such as ancient thrones overturned, old china, battles lost, the abolition of the German Empire, with dissertations on the prices of pictures, interpersed with mournful eulogiums on the excellent qualities of deceased friends, and monstrous good anecdotes of the most ridiculous characters living; but not

a word arose with respect to that business which had brought the one from Vienna; and with the anguish of a secret poison, searched and penetrated the very core of the other's heart.

The Earl conducted his brother-in-law over the park, and shewed him the changes made and contemplated; and Riversdale, who possessed a refined and elegant taste, suggested various improvements. Every thing between them proceeded in the most urbane manner; but ever and anon Lord Sandyford glanced his eye towards the grand avenue, and made their walks wind among the grounds immediately in the vicinity of the mansion. Still there was no appearance of our hero; and when the first dinner bell gave warning that it was time to dress, they returned together, both perplexed and thoughtful; insomuch, that had they been questioned as to the topics of their previous conversation, it is probable that neither the one or the other could have given any rational answer.

At last the sound of a carriage was heard to enter the portal; and the Earl, who had by that time met Riversdale again in the drawing-room,

became pale and agitated, and immediately retired. Soon after, our hero came in alone; and taking a seat abruptly without speaking, stretched out his feet, and lying back in the chair, seemed to be gazing at the pictures on the ceiling, while his eye was constantly turning with anxiety towards the door.

Lord Riversdale looked at him with the most intense curiosity; but a feeling which he could not master deprived him of the power of speaking.

When Andrew had sat in this state for about five minutes, he rose and moved with rapid and disordered steps towards the door. In an instant, however, he checked himself, and walking calmly back to his chair, folded his arms and looked gloomily on the floor.

Another five minutes passed, and he began to rub his hair with his hand, and to beat with his heel; at last he said to Lord Riversdale, "Dog on't, but this is dreadfu'."

A servant at that moment happened to have occasion to come into the room; and as he opened

the door, Andrew started up and rushed towards it; but on seeing who it was, he shrunk back, and walking to one of the windows, retired behind the curtains, as if to hide the emotion of his disappointment.

"What have you done?" cried Lord Riversdale, alarmed by his strange and agitated manner.

"Made a spoon, or spoilt a horn," was the impressive reply.

"For the love of Heaven, explain yourself!" exclaimed his Lordship, earnestly.

"When my head's round again in its right posture. Then; but hae patience till then," said our hero, becoming still more and more agitated.

"I fear——" resumed Riversdale.

"So do I, so do I," interrupted Andrew, running out from behind the curtain; but all at once checking himself, he added, calmly, "What should I fear? I hae done but what duty and honesty required of me; the issues are in the hands of Prodence, and they canna be in better. My Lord, we're twa fools to be racking ourselves at this gait;

I ought to have mair confidence in both Lord and Lady Sandyford, than to give myself up to a panic like this."

At these words, several bells were rung hastily, and a bustle was heard in the gallery, which led to the drawing-room. Lord Riversdale instinctively opened the door, and a blaze of lights was seen approaching. Andrew darted a hasty glance out; and uttering a shout of gladness and delight, rushed into the gallery; and in less than a minute after, returned, leading the Earl and Countess, with such a benign expression of satisfaction in his countenance, that Lord Riversdale often afterwards declared he had never seen any thing half so magnificent, and wondered how a figure so mean, and a physiognomy so common, could bear the impress of so much dignity. When they reached the middle of the room, and when the servants, who on hearing of their Lady's arrival, attended with lights to conduct her along the gallery, had retired, Lord Sandyford said, in a gay manner, which, however, became gradually serious and elevated, "What a pity it is that the mythology of

the poets is not true! I should otherwise this night have raised an altar to Mercury, and instituted some social festival in honour of him, as Andrew Wylie. My friend, you have taught me one thing;—when we do an act of kindness, it is the benevolence of Heaven directing us to achieve some good for ourselves. The partiality that I from the first felt for you, and which dictated to me that interest I must ever take in your welfare, was the pure prompting of my better angel to work out, through your means, the restoration of myself, of my happiness, and of this noble woman's inborn latent worth."

"Weel, weel, my Lord," cried our hero, hardly able to repress the tears of joy that were starting into his eyes, "see that it be sae, but the less that's said about byganes the better; so, as the dinner bell's noo ringing, wi' your leave to-day, my Lord, only to-day, I'll lead my Leddy to her place at the table."

His Lordship instantly took the Countess by the hand; and with a look of thanks that was worth more than a thousand pounds weight of gold, as

Andrew afterwards said, presented her to our hero. Lord Riversdale followed them mechanically ; for the whole scene appeared to him as something which surpassed his comprehension.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

PATRONAGE.

Although our hero, actuated by gratitude and affection, had laboured to effect the reconciliation of Lord and Lady Sandyford by the most direct means, and with the most determined energy; yet when the event was accomplished, it is not to be questioned that considerations less disinterested than those feelings, mingled with the agreeable reflections which naturally belong to the success of a benevolent purpose. He could not but be sensible, that in their happiness he had obtained a fulcrum for the engines that were to raise his own fortune; and that in all probability he had secured the patronage of the Marquis of Avonside, as well as that of the Earl. But we should be doing him injustice, to suppose that the

persuasion of this produced any change in his conduct or demeanour. He had, as we have early insinuated, formed in his outset a plan of life, and to that he adhered with the constancy and the zeal of a character endowed with strong inherent powers and sensibilities, the value of which was fully appreciated both by Lord and Lady Sandyford, in a conversation with Lord Riversdale one morning, after Andrew had left Chastington-hall, and returned to London.

His Lordship, on remarking upon his earnest simplicity and peculiar humours, observed, that he thought it was the duty equally of the two families to unite their interest and influence for his advancement.

"I expect," said the Countess, "that my father will feel the obligation; but for Sandyford and myself, he is our friend; and we shall never insult the greatness of his mind with the offer of any favour, for we owe him every thing. Our part is to promote his happiness and his honour."

And when, in the course of a few days after this conversation, the Marquis of Avonside came to congratulate them on their re-union, the sub-

ject was renewed, with a declaration on the part of the Earl, that, in a pecuniary point of view, he considered his whole fortune at the disposal of Wylie; but he added, laughingly, "Perhaps if you knew the being, my Lord, you would think there was no great generosity in my saying so, though I do it with the most perfect sincerity."

"Then," replied the Marquis, "I see what I ought to do—I will take him under my own particular patronage, and the first thing I shall do on my return to town will be to see him, and ascertain what he is fit for; and then the whole weight of my influence shall be exerted in his favour."

"I doubt, my Lord," replied the Earl, somewhat waggishly, for he did not entertain the most awful respect for the talents or the discernment of his Lordship, "it will not be easy to ascertain what he is fit for—but he is able, I think, for a greater office than I oenceive it is in your Lordship's power to obtain."

"Lord Sandyford," said the Marquis, with a manner that he meant should be emphatic, "you have taken too little interest in public affairs, to know the extent of my influence with his

Majesty's government, and you lean with too decided a bias to the Opposition, to appreciate the sort of talent requisite for office. It is not the splendour of speculative ability that we seek, but a plodding industry, that never tires at its task."

"True," said the Earl, "I have been somewhat a truant in my public duty; but your Lordship knows that were things properly managed, the opinion of the few—and the wise are always the few—would ever predominate."

"I am not surprised that such should be the sentiment of a regular opponent to his Majesty's government; but, my Lord, as our political opinions can never coalesce, it is unnecessary to discuss such topics," replied the Marquis.

The Earl was tempted to rejoin, "Unless there be a change of ministry;" but he suppressed the sarcasm, and said cheerfully, "Well, I commit him to your providence, my Lord, and shall long exceedingly till I know the rich effects."

The Marquis of Avonside, who imagined that it was necessary for the safety of the state, that he should be always on his post, soon after this conversation returned to London, and immedi-

ately on his arrival sent for our hero; for his Lordship held it as a maxim, that expedition was the soul of business.

The person of Wylie was not altogether unknown to the Marquis; he had seen him frequently at Lady Sandyford's parties; but notwithstanding, he was a little startled when he saw so insignificant a looking personage enter his library. After requesting him to take a seat, and when he had resumed his own chair at the writing-table, his Lordship said, in the most condescending manner,—"Both my Lord and Lady Sandyford have recommended you to me in the strongest manner, and Lord Riversdale also has expressed the most earnest solicitude that I should use my influence in your behalf. Desirous to gratify the wishes of such dear relations, and to manifest my own high sense of your prudence and zeal, I have sent for you this morning, with the view of inquiring in what manner my influence can be serviceable to your interests."

Andrew had some notion of the general character of his Lordship, and this short speech enabled him to understand it thoroughly.

"I am greatly obligated," was his answer, for such kindness; but I am no able to point out, at this present time, just to say how your Lordship's great power and efficacy might be serviceable."

"I can easily obtain for you a lucrative appointment abroad," said the Marquis.

"That would be a great thing," replied Andrew; "but as I'm of a learned profession, I would fain go on with it, rather than gang abroad in a situation where I might not be able to give satisfaction, and might, in consequence, affront your Lordship, and thereby lose that good opinion, which is of mair value to me than gold."

"You are a very discreet young man," said the Marquis, conciliated by the address with which this was said. "But in your profession I may have it in my power to assist you."

"There can be no doubt of that, my Lord,—your Lordship has it in your power to be the maker of a man, whenever it stands with your own pleasure," replied Andrew, respectfully.

The Marquis smiled in the most self-complacent manner, and with an accent of the greatest

good humour, said, "Then I can assure you, Mr Wylie, that I was never more disposed to make any man than at this time, only shew me the way."

This was coming effectually to the point; and Andrew, aware of the strict honour with which his Lordship redeemed his promises, said, "I'm sure, my Lord, it is not to seek what I ought to say in the way of thankfulness, for this great patronage; but for some sma' time yet, I cannot weel see how it may be rightly applied. Howsever, if your Lordship, when I find a fitting occasion to call for your powerful succour, would be pleased to gie me a bit lift in the way o' business, I'll be greatly your debtor."

"Not at all, Mr Wylie, not at all; and I must say that your modesty and prudence increase my desire to serve you," replied the Marquis. "I will not, however, promise to make you my agent, while my old friend Jack Docquet lives; but he is now above seventy, and of an apoplectic corpulency. However, you may rely upon me, and whenever my interest and influence can be of use, freely command them."

This interview our hero ever justly considered as one of the most important events in his life; for the Marquis spoke of him not only as a prodigy of prudence, but possessed of the most promising talents in his profession; at the same time declaring his own determination to patronize a young man, who seemed destined to confer so much lustre on his country.

CHAPTER XXXV.

RETROSPECTIONS.

For a considerable time after the re-union of Lord and Lady Sandyford, no particular incident occurred in the life of our hero. He continued to give the same plodding attention to his duties in the office of Mr Vellum; but it was remarked by Pierston, who was unacquainted with the important service he had rendered to his patron, that he seemed to feel more confidence in himself, and to move, as it were, with a freer spirit in the world,—the unconscious influence of being sensible that he had obtained pledges of future prosperity.

With his grandmother he continued in the same dutiful correspondence, through the medium of Mr Tannyhill; but while he cheered her with the assurance of the sunshine that Heaven conti-

nued to shed upon his prospects, he wrote with a temperance and moderation that gave her no reason to suppose he had met with any extraordinary instance of good fortune.

With Mr and Mrs Ipsey he had continued from his arrival on the most intimate terms. The retired Solicitor not only relished humour, but was himself a humorist, and our hero had always a plate at his Sunday's dinner. The old gentleman was indeed his chief confidante, and by his experience enabled him to lay out the proceeds of his salary to the best advantage. On different occasions, Andrew had insisted on repaying the money which was so generously advanced for his out-fit; but Mr Ipsey as often refused it in the most decided manner. After the reconciliation of Lord and Lady Sandyford, however, partly with the view of indirectly discharging the debt, but chiefly to express the obligations that he felt himself under for the kindness he had received from Mr Ipsey, he presented his kinswoman with a handsome piece of plate, and from time to time continued to make her small presents of lace, which he had observed was almost the only arti-

cle of finery that she admired; but ladies, in general, whatever their stock and tastes may be, are particularly pleased with gifts of lace, especially Mechlenburgh, Brussels, or Valenciennes, when it has been smuggled by the donors themselves.

By these means, his character, without being materially raised in the opinion of his early friends, was fully established as a young man of good sense, destined to acquire riches. His grandmother and the schoolmaster, on the receipt of every new letter, were the more and more persuaded of this, and that he would surpass all their brightest hopes. This persuasion, however, was not founded on any thing he said, but upon the constancy of success which seemed to attend him, and also upon some imperfect report of the company in which he had been see by Miss Mizy and Mary Cunningham during their visit to London.

With respect to Miss Cunningham, from the time she had returned Martha saw her but seldom; and when she inquired occasionally for Andrew, it was in a politer, but far less agreeable manner, than before her visit to the metropolis. The old woman remarked the difference in speak-

ing of it to the master, but ascribed it to anxiety on her brother's account, who, after his removal to the Craiglands, grew every day worse and worse, insomuch, that towards the end of the year his recovery was deemed hopeless.

Mr Tannyhill, who had ever taken the warmest interest in the destiny of his pupil, and which his situation as amanuensis to Martha tended to foster, took a different view of the alteration in the deportment of Mary Cunningham. Being occasionally invited on the Sunday evenings to drink tea with Miss Mizy and the Laird, he had acquired a more distinct knowledge of the sort of connexions which Andrew had formed; for he had led the conversation often to the subject, and it occurred to him that our hero, presuming on his old familiarity with the young lady, had perhaps too eagerly obtruded himself on her notice, by which he had probably offended her pride, especially as he observed, that when her aunt spoke of his behaviour in terms of approbation, she sometimes expressed her astonishment at the means by which he had managed to get himself introduced into such fashionable society.

From an amiable solicitude to lessen any prejudice which he thought adverse to the good opinion that he himself entertained of his favourite, he took every opportunity of speaking in the kindest manner of the affections and principles of Andrew; and when Miss Cunningham once happened to say, a little petulantly, "I wonder, Mr Tannyhill, what makes you think that I care to hear about the oddity?" he mildly rebuked her, by observing, that "you canna, surely, Miss Mary, but take a pleasure to hear of the well-doing of a parish bairn? Ye were brought up in the innocence of childhood together,—ye breathed the same pure halesome air,—beeked in the same sunshine,—heard the same bonny birds in the spring,—and gathered the same summer flowers,—a' things which make up the ingredients of a charm that the kindly heart would never part with. Its no right of you, Miss Mary, to speak so lightly of Andrew; for its my notion he'll be a credit to us a' yet. Ye see your aunt, Miss Mizy, who is a most discreet lady, thinks better of the poor laddie, and I'm sure she has had but sma' reason to do so; for ye canna but mind how when the Cap-

tain, that's now bedrid, and Andrew, were callants at my school, the dreadfu' damage they did to her mourning, on account of that queer pawkie pyet, whilk was in the use and wont of stealing her thread-papers."

"Oh," replied Mary, laughingly, while a gentle blush tinged her neck and bosom, and heightened the bloom of her face, "I'll never forget it, and the sad hand poor Wheelie made with his task of fifty psalms till I helped him."

"Then," said the master, with guileless simplicity, "what for, Miss Mary, do ye so geck at the honest lad's thriving?"

"I don't know why I should," was the answer, "for I'm sure it always gives me pleasure; but my aunt has taken it into her head that he's another Solomon, and is constantly plaguing me about paying him a visit when he's Lord Mayor of London. 'Tis surprising to hear what nonsense sensible people will sometimes talk. I dare say he's a very kind and dutiful grandson, and in time he may return among us like the nabobs from India, with a heavy purse and a broken constitution, and nobody in the parish will be better

pleased to see him than myself; but really, Mr Tannyhill, I do not understand why you should fancy that I can have any particular interest in the matter."

"I'm very glad to hear you say so, Miss Mary," replied the simple advocate; "for I had a fear that maybe when ye met him at that grand ball in London, he had done something that wasna just suitable from Martha Docken's oye to the Laird of Craigland's dochter."

The blood instantaneously overspread the face of his fair auditor, and deepened her roses to the colour of the ruby; but presently recovering herself, she laughed, and said, "O dear, no! On the contrary, he behaved far better than I could have thought,—I had no idea that the creature was possessed of half so much mother-wit. He was both better bred, and far more sensible, than any other gentleman we met there."

But although this conversation, on the whole, afforded unqualified delight to the innocent dominie, there was yet something in the behaviour of Miss Cunningham that he could not comprehend; and he set down her apparent dislike to hear of

And how's prosperity to that jealousy of adventurous talent, which about this time began to enter into competition with the entailed gentility of those feudal relics—the west country lairds, not reflecting that single women never think on such a subject, nor even married ones, when they have many daughters to dispose of.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

PARTNERSHIP.

In the meantime, Andrew was the frequent guest of Lord and Lady Sandyford, who continued to reside at Chastington-hall; and in his excursions from London, he generally paid Mordaunt a visit, who always renewed his wish, that he would allow him an opportunity to serve him, as if the unsatisfied feeling of gratitude was become uneasy.

"The time's coming," he would as often reply; "and whenever I'm of a legal capacity to enter into business on my own account, I'll then make bold to beg the help of your friendship."

The Earl and Countess made no professions They took up his interests more earnestly; for, ascribing their mutual happiness entirely to his

fearless and free integrity, they studied the means of promoting his fortune, as a more worthy and delicate return than the sordid offerings of pecuniary generosity.

But a sudden event brought into play and action all the favourable dispositions of the friendships he had formed. Old Jack Docquet, Solicitor to the Marquis of Avonside, expired, as his Lordship had anticipated, of apoplexy; and with that punctual respect to his promise, which constituted one of the most honourable traits in that nobleman's character, our hero was informed by express of the occurrence; and that his Lordship's manifold and complicated affairs awaited his acceptance.

The habit of drolling with his higher acquaintance made Andrew often indulge himself in the same humour with his master; and accordingly, on going to chambers on the morning in which he received this important information, he asked permission to visit his friends at Chastington-hall, and Mr Mordaunt; at the same time requesting the advance of a small sum to account, for the expences of his journey.

As Vellum was writing out the cheque, Andrew said, "I'm thinking, sir, that maybe it would be as weel, providing you were agreeable, that we should gang into partnership thegither."

The Solicitor paused, as if he had been smitten with a sudden judgment, as Andrew himself described it; and said, "What did you say, Mr Wylie?"

"I was saying," resumed Andrew, "that may be it might be as well, if you would tak me into partnership."

"Partnership!" exclaimed the Solicitor; "why you know nothing of business. You have acquired neither the requisite knowledge of the forms, or the substantials of the law."

"I didna say any thing about them. I only thought that if you would take me in for a partner, some good might come out o't."

Mr Vellum remembered in what way Lord Sandyford had saddled him with seven hundred and fifty pounds a-year, and did not much like this proposition, on the eve of a visit to his Lordship. He, however, replied, in a calm and reasonable manner, "In course of time, Wylie, you

may perhaps have reason to expect an interest along with me; but at present you must be sensible that you are still too young."

"Mr Pitt," replied Andrew, "wasna muckle older than me, when he was made minister of Great Britain, France, and Ireland."

"You do not surely compare yourself with Mr Pitt?" exclaimed Vellum, petrified at the remark.

"O dear, no!" answered Andrew; "I had nae sic thought. He was minister of three kingdoms; but I'm only wanting a bit share or portion in your business. There's an unco difference between it and three kingdoms, Mr Vellum."

The Solicitor did not well know what answer to make to this. He was chilled to think with what pertinacity Andrew adhered to his proposal; and, somewhat eagerly, said, "Pray, Mr Wylie, has any body suggested this notion to you? I am surprised how it could be supposed you were qualified already to take a part as principal in my business."

"I'll be vera plain wi' you," replied Andrew; "just as plain and as pleasant, as ye are wi' me. Nobody said any thing to me on the subject, nor

did I ask the advice of any body; but I thought ye were yoursel by this time sensible o' the weight of my interest."

"I have had reason," retorted Vellum, in an acute tone, "to know that weight."

"I thought so," replied our hero coolly; "and I thought likewise you would consider't. I would therefore be vera glad, if ye would gie me a short answer, as to whether ye will be content with me as a partner, or no?"

"Some time hence, Mr Wylie, I think the question may be put with more propriety. At present you must be well aware, that you are not ripe for what you propose."

"I'm no presuming to say that I am; but, Mr Vellum, a man wi' money in his purse can command talents and learning, though he hae neither himsel. There are plenty of well learned able young men, and some auld han's too, in our profession, whose help I can get wi' thankfulness—they being without friends."

This was a touch of policy beyond the utmost conceptions of Vellum; and he said, in an accent of evident alarm, "You seem to presume on the partiality which Lord Sandyford has shewn you."

"No," replied our hero, drily. "But I do not see what that has to do with our present discourse —which was to know, if you would take me into partnership?"

"Truly, Mr Wylie," answered the Solicitor, moderating his manner, "you could scarcely expect an immediate answer to such a proposition."

"I wasna expecting an immediate answer. Far be it frae me, Mr Vellum, to put you into ony disorder or agitation on the subject; for if I get a favourable waft o' your good will, I can bide a wee for an answer, as to the amount of the share that ye're willing to give me."

Vellum, while he bit his lips with vexation, could not refrain from smiling at this; and said, with his wonted worldly off-hand good humour, "Well, well, I see how it is, Wylie; we are to be partners, and I don't think we shall quarrel about the terms."

"I dinna think so either," replied Andrew; "and as an earnest that I wasna coming all as a cess upon you, a' wi' the rake and no wi' the showel, I hae some reason to think that I can wyse you the business of Sir Thomas Beauchamp and

Mr Mordaunt, the whilk will help to make the pot boil between us. And the Marquis of Avonside has this morning sent me word, that old Mr Docquet, his solicitor, has departed this life, and that his Lordship's concerns, which were in his hands, are welcome to my acceptance."

Vellum laughed, and said, "And so with all this in store, you have been slyly feeling my pulse. Upon my conscience, Wylie, if you are not the most unfathomable being I ever knew. However, to shew you that I duly appreciate the importance of the clients that you are likely to bring to us, I will admit you at once to a half of our mutual business, and the partnership shall be dated from this day."

"A bargain be't," cried Andrew, gaily; adding, "And ye may depend on't, Mr Vellum, that the horse that brings grist to the mill is as useful as the water that ca's the wheel. I'll no trouble you with ony interference in the professional parts of the business; but I'll ettle my best to gather wark for your head and hands."

In this way the footing of Andrew was established in the world; and Vellum, with his cha-

racteristic promptitude, then said, " A number of friends and clients are to dine with me to-day at Sandyford-house, and you must be of the party, when I will announce the connection that has been formed, and which, I doubt not, will redound to our mutual satisfaction and advantage."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

ECONOMY.

In returning home to dress for dinner, our hero reflected that it would be no longer respectable in him to continue those parsimonious habits which he had hitherto maintained, and that although it was still prudent to adhere to an economical system, yet it was not fit he should continue to present to his old friends that appearance of penury, of which he had not, without obvious reasons, been accused. Accordingly, he determined to sacrifice to the opinion of the world, and aware of the character which he possessed among his acquaintances, he determined to surprise them.

In one of the obscure streets in the neighbourhood of Queen's-Square, where he lodged in Vel-

lum's private residence, he had noticed a bill in the window of a large house, which had evidently been the abode, at one time, of some eminent and opulent character, and in going to Sandyford-house to dinner, he walked to examine the neglected premises.

He found the mansion, without being exactly old-fashioned, behind the present taste, but spacious in the apartments, and richly ornamented. It had, in fact, been erected and fitted up by an old bachelor of an eccentric disposition, and who had indulged his peculiar humour in the style and decorations. Much of the furniture was so adapted, both in form and place, to the rooms, that it partook of the nature of fixtures, and as every thing was in excellent order, the house was ready for the immediate reception of a tenant.

Andrew was pleased with the general air of the whole, and amused himself with the surprise he would give to his friends, by inviting them to such a place; for the terms, both on account of the situation, and the general singularity of the edifice, were very low, and he determined at once to

take it. Accordingly, he went immediately to the house-agent, and settled the business.

In his way to Sandyford-house, he called at the confectioner's who supplied the parties of his fashionable friends, to secure for him a suitable housekeeper and butler.

"They are to be," he said, "the very best of their kind. The woman maun be used to a genteel economy, but to the style of the best families; and the man is to be a gausy, middle-aged, staid, and orderly carl, who has lived with bachelor gentlemen o' discretion and prudence. He'll need a bit laddie to help him, but that I'll let him choose for himsel; ye'll be sure, however, that ye get me folk that can be trusted, and I'll pay them the same wage that is paid in the best houses; and ye'll lose nae time about this job, for I am to hae a party this day month at dinner, for the which you will mak a' preparation. Ye'll see that every thing is the vera best o' its kind; in short, Mr Comfit, as ye say in your advertising accounts of my Lady This's ball, and my Lord That's dinner, we maun hae a' the delicacies o' the season.

It's my first dinner, and I would be affrontit gin it was nae past common—which it must both be in the rarity and the goodness. And I'll tell you another thing, Mr Comfit—the dainties of the first and second course ye'll serve up on the finest china, with a' the requisite appurtenances, in the best order. For we maun first please the eye, and satisfy the mouth, before we play ony pranks; but in the third course, and the desert, ye maun shew your cunning—baith in the viands and the vessels. As for the eatables, I say nothing, let them only be the rarest and the best; but for the vessels, knives and forks, &c., ye'll go through all the curiosity and china shops, and pick out the queerest and drollest sort of plenishing that's possible to be had. Ye'll no buy't, however, for that would be needless; but hire it, let the cost be what it may."

These instructions were promised to be carefully fulfilled; and we need not add, that orders for luxuries, by those who are supposed able to pay for them, are never in London stinted in the supply.

No similar event, in the higher sphere of the world of fashion, had, for many years, excited so much speculation, as the idea of our hero's dinner. The guests invited amounted to twenty-one, and the majority were persons of the first rank and consideration in the country, actuated, in general, by the curiosity of the thing; some, however, were influenced by the persuasion, that, under Andrew's simplicity and plain exterior, talents for business of a high order were concealed, and several were interested in the affair, by their delight and relish of his curious humour. All agreed in one thing, that a dinner from Wylie must of itself be something very extraordinary; and that in a street which none of their coachmen or servants had ever heard of, it could not fail to afford them much amusement, whatever the fare might be. A vast deal of talk was the consequence, and upon comparing notes, it was soon discovered, that the party had been selected with great sagacity; insomuch, that interest began to be made for a place. But our hero was inexorable; none but his elderly and most distinguished

friends and acquaintances were invited, and his answers to the younger sprigs of nobility and fashion, who were continually boring him for places at what they called his benefit, was uniformly the same—"Stay till your betters be serv't."

The affair at last amounted to such importance, that the ladies began to lay themselves out for invitations, and a solemn representation was made to him by three duchesses, four marchionesses, five countesses, six viscountesses, and seven baronesses, besides the daughters of all orders of the nobility, and ladyships of minor degree, without number. But to them likewise his answer was—"Patience, patience—cry a' at once, leddies, and see who will be first serv't." This, however, had no effect in pacifying them.

Whenever he made his appearance at any party, up came a flock of matrons, and their goslings, flying with their fans in the one hand, and their trains in the other, to pester him for invitations to his party. Among others, the Dowager Lady Clacket was the most perilous and vexatious in her importunity; insomuch, that one night at the Duchess of Dashingwell's assembly, he took her

Ladyship aside, and complained to her in a most disconsolate tone, about the plague he suffered on account of his dinner.

" Is't no a hard case, my Leddy," said he, " that I should be driven to my wits-end by the women, about this bit chack o' dinner? Every body but you, my Leddy, just wearies me out o' my senses. Noo, this is vera hard, my Leddy, for ye ken I hae had for some time a notion o' gieing a ball and supper, whereat ye're to do the honours o' the meeting. I wonder how it is that they winna be pacified with that expectation. But am resolved, if they fash me ony mair, the deevil be licket of ball or supper they'll get frae me, or any other civility, if I hear, after this night, another word frae them on the subject. Noo, as I consider you, my Leddy, interested in this, ye'll no blame me, if ye're a' disappointed; for what I would do, if the women would but behave themselves, would be something, my Leddy, to be spoken o' when ye're dead and gone."

Her Ladyship was won; and the whole females of the party were, in the course of a few minutes, quieted, and desisted from their impor-

tunity, under an assurance that Wylie was to give a most incomparable ball, and that Lady Clackit was to do the matronly honours on the occasion. Some thought that Andrew had not made a very good choice, but all agreed, that when it did take place, the thing would be exquisite.

While thus an underplot was working to effect, time ran on, and the day and hour of the dinner arrived. Carriage after carriage drove up to the darkened front of our hero's antique mansion; and the moment that each successive guest stepped into the hall, he was smitten with a conviction that he had formed a false estimate of the feast. The hall, it is true, had an air of singularity in its appearance; but the footman, who gave admittance, was dressed in a remarkably handsome, but plain livery, and the general effect of the first impression was strikingly respectable and genteel.

On ascending to the drawing-room, some little emotion of wonderment was excited by the style of the room. It was splendid, but strange—the furniture was in an odd taste, and the ornaments

were curious; but the general effect was good, and every one felt that he was in no common place. Andrew received his guests with his wonted ease; but none of them were half so much surprised, both at the house and the company, as Mr Vellum.

The admiration of all, however, was the dinner-table. Nothing could exceed the elegance, and, at the same time, the simplicity of the first and second course. The service was truly beautiful, the cookery was delicious, and the wines were incomparable. London had indeed been ransacked for them. The whole world could produce no better of their kinds; and a sensation of wonder and astonishment made the guests look at one another, utterly unable to divine by what enchantment such a palace and banquet had been raised.

At the third course, the mirthful knavery of their host manifested itself. Such a congregation of ancient and grotesque china had never been assembled on one board together; and peals of laughter broke forth as each new curiosity was set down.

"Ay," said our hero, enjoying their amuse-

ment, "ye ken I haena dishes enew o' ae sort to serve you a' through alike; so I thought that I would make up, according to my ain taste, something just as fine and genteel as could well be; and ye see here such a show, as I am sure the Prince of Wales himsel, wi' all his fee-fa-fums, canna match."

But the third course was only the morning-star to the sun of the desert. The pagodas of India, and the temples of China and Japan, and the produce of all climates, seemed to have been laid under contribution. In a word, the house, the treat, the wines, and the master, were pronounced unparalleled; but the gusto which pervaded all, was the most racy thing in the whole concern; and the description excited an inordinate expectation among the ladies respecting the ball and supper. It was agreed among them that it ought to be a fancy-ball, and Lady Clackit was authorised to represent the wishes of the community of fashion on the subject.

"Me gie a fancy-ball, Leddy Clackit!" was the exclamation. "Do you think I hae lost my judgment? What would the neighbours say of a

fancy-ball, and sic-like masquerading, in my sober and methodical house?—No, no, my Leddy—nae sic flagaries wi' me. I just mean to gie a decent dance to fifteen lads and fifteen lassies—a very good number for a country-dance; and there's a blind fiddler in our neighbourhood, that has promised to come for half-a-crown, bread and cheese, and a dram; and I'll gie you penny-pyes, eggs, and strong ale, when ye're weary wi' dancing to his springs.—But a fancy-ball!—Na, na, my Leddy; unless ye can fancy the ball like what I hae told you of, the sorrow o' a ball shall be in my house."

"You cannot be in earnest," cried her Ladyship. "You could never expect me to take a part in such a hop of a thing as that?"

"Then, if ye winna do't, I assure you nae ball or supper shall be given by me; and so I leave you to settle't wi' your kimmers and cronies the best manner you can."

"Mr Wylie, you have used me very ill," said her Ladyship, walking away in a huff, to declaim against the shabby avaricious wretch, as she called him.

But some of the more knowing matrons were

not taken in by her report; especially his old friend the Duchess of Dashingwell, who went to him immediately, and proposed herself as the matron, Lady Clackit having resigned. In this our hero was fairly matched by the women, for he never had intended to give any entertainment at all; and the whole, from first to last, was but a stratagem to be released from their importunities. The offer of the Duchess of Dashingwell, however, was an honour of which he knew the full value, and did not for a moment hesitate.

"Your Grace," said he, "kens the conditions; and that my house is no used to the servitude of balls and routs; but if you will hae a gathering in't, I'm sure it wouldna become me to refuse. But my Leddy Duchess, I'll just hae the fiddler that frightened that weak woman, Leddy Clackit, and the penny-pyes, the eggs, and the strong ale—that's what ye'll get."

"Oh, it will be delightful!" exclaimed her Grace; "it will be the most unique thing ever heard of. I wouldn't for all the balls and routes of the season, lose such a treat. Do, pray, fix at once about it!"

"That I leave to your Grace's convenience," said Andrew; "since ye will hae sic daffin, ye maun time't yoursel. I leave a' the invitations to you—only the number maun be limited to fifteen couple,—in the first instance."

The Duchess flew about the room, delighted with her commission; and every one was anxious to be placed on her list; so that when the ball did take place, it was quite as extraordinary of its kind as the dinner. For Andrew, on consenting to enlarge the number of the invitations, restricted the selection to the gayest and most beautiful of all her Grace's acquaintances.

END OF VOLUME SECOND.

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